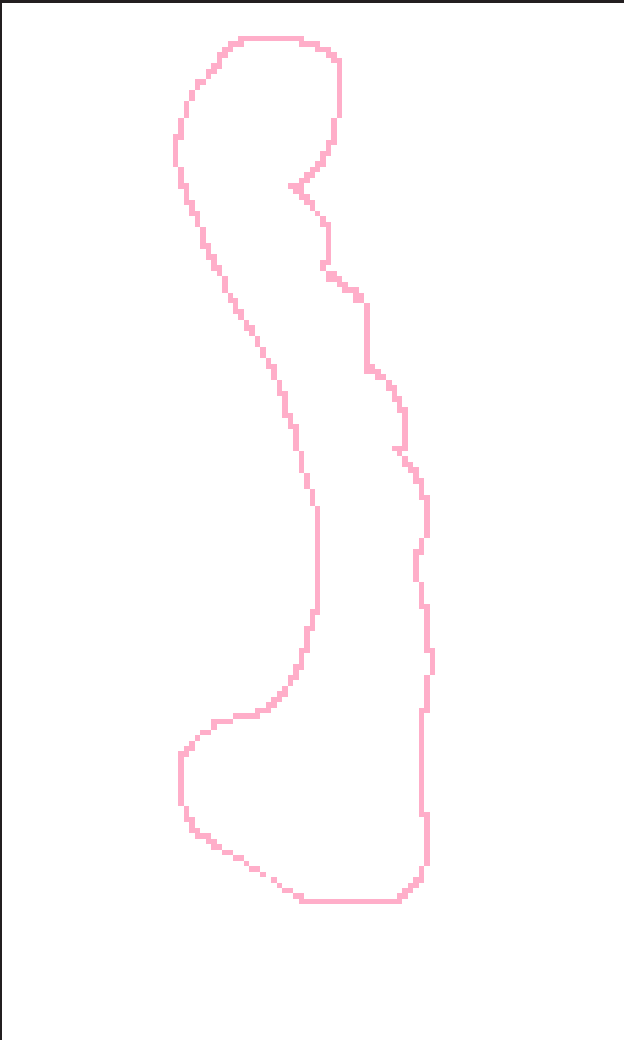


THE OMEN

Volume 58, Issue 2

Erotica Edition



HAVE YOU SEEN THIS DILDO?

Last seen in the Omen Office.
Identifiable features:

- irresistible gleam
- reassuring heft
- shapely form
- musty odor
- friendly demeanor
- cooks a mean lasagna
- innocence

REWARD:

REDEMPTION+FORGIVENESS

If found, please contact omen@hampshire.edu. We're not kidding. We wish we were.

IN THIS ISSUE...

Speak:

Weirding Up Hampshire Classes... [p.4](#)
Aristocratic Tutoring and Hampshire... [p.8](#)

Sex

An Ode to Lube... [p.16](#)
Rising Dawn... [p.17](#)
Man Named Fox... [p.25](#)
three years apart, you and i... [p.26](#)
A Mad Night... [p.31](#)
The Voynich Womanuscript... [p.32](#)
Like a Dream... [p.37](#)
Turnip With Rachel... [p.41](#)
A young Answer to an old Riddle... [p.42](#)
on the merits of sex... [p.43](#)
Crunchtime... [p.44](#)
An Angel one night stand... [p.48](#)
End-of-Career Marlon Brando Walks Across the screen and
says the Word "Penis." ... [p.54](#)

Staff Box: (In order of appearance)

Jay: got nibbled by Him
Leo: :^)
Malfoy: scattered throughout the spacetime continuum
Nicholas: umm idk *walks away with dildo-shaped belly*
Justice: The
Willow: entered the witness protection program
Mia: Same place the Wellness Center hours went
Max: Planning next semester's New and Transfer Students
Orientation
Lucas: Preheating in the oven
Shanna: In my mask
Iris: Vaporized in a terrible explosion
Teddy: It left with the narcan
Zuki: To a *Much Ado About Nothing* cast member
Sean: Got taken by the squirrels. The squirrels got it
Zipper: It turned into a worm
María: Merrill A311
Aidan: President Wingenbach's ass
Alice: The Dakin washing machines
Zanzy: Ukraine to help the war effort

Front Cover: Jay Poggi
Back Cover: Mia Sanghvi

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ics, and whiny emo poetry: we'll publish it all, and
we're happy to do it. The Omen is about giving you
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the Omen has hardly ever missed an issue, making
it Hampshire's longest-running publication.


Your Omen submission (you're submitting
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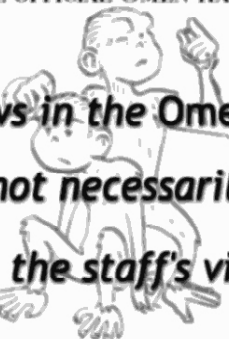
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ternate Friday nights in the basement of Merrill in
the company of a computer with an extremely in-
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just about any other place we can find to put it.



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THE OFFICIAL OMEN HAIKU:



Views in the Omen (5)
Do not necessarily (7)
Reflect the staff's views (5)

EDITORIAL
BRACE FOR IMPACT

by Leo Zhang and Jay Poggi

As you flip through the first few pages of this issue, you may wonder: *Hey, where's all the fucking porn??* Fear not—hark! The approach of impending PENIS BLAST on the horizon! Upon its arrival, you will find yourself in Sex Zone. Just so you know what to look out for, take a gander at the artist's rendition of PENIS BLAST below!



SECTION SPEAK

The Re-Remaking of a College, Chapter 2:
Weirding Up Hampshire Classes
or, On the Necessity of Pedagogical Risk-Taking
by Jay Poggi

“I don’t like giving tests, you guys.” I had a teacher in high school who admitted this after going over the material we were expected to memorize for an upcoming exam. I recall feeling an electrical current pass between my classmates and me as we looked at one another, waiting. A courageous friend of mine raised her hand. “Alma,” she said, “we don’t like taking tests.”

Alma cancelled the test. How we felt then is how I imagine soccer fans feel when their team wins the World Cup. We could have flipped desks and danced with laboratory skeletons, but Alma channeled our rambunctious energy into a more constructive task: designing a project with her.

That moment has remained shining in my mind as an example of a teacher taking advantage of the freedom provided by their quirky little school to do something new. In this chapter of The Re-remaking of a College, I’d like to explore how professors at Hampshire can do the same thing.

Why Take a Class?

Taking a class has a lot of obvious benefits over trying to learn something on your own: a class gives you regular and reliable access to a professor, an expert with years of experience in the subject you’re interested in; it acts as a space for students with similar interests but different backgrounds to meet one another; and it provides structure, giving a clear direction and sense of progression to learning.

As a transfer student from Clark University, I know that Hampshire delivers on these promises better than most other schools. Our low student to teacher ratio and our committee system give students the opportunity be personally mentored by their professors; our small class sizes make it easier for students to truly get to know each other; and our lack of requirements means professors are free to teach about subjects of greater specificity and depth than other schools would allow.

Still, I believe there’s a lot of room for Hampshire classes to improve by treating students as collaborators, teaching a balance of theory and skill, and using experimental structures to make the most of students’ time.

“Working With” vs “Doing To”

If I asked you what a class is (as I often ask myself in the middle of the night), you’d probably tell me it’s a structure that allows a teacher to teach a group of students all at once. This is an accurate description of most classes one will find in higher education, but I think it points to an underlying problem in how classes are often conducted: as an action being done by a professor to a group of students. This is a dynamic progressive education scholar Alfie Kohn refers to as a “doing to” model of education.

We see the “doing to” model in how mainstream higher ed classes rely primarily on lectures and readings to deliver the content of the course. The professor projects information to the students, and the students listen and learn—in theory, at least. The truth is, students do not learn well in a “doing to” model.

I realize I’m preaching to the choir a bit, given this is Hampshire College. We all know that we won’t retain information long-term if it’s transmitted merely as words that we’re meant to remember. Rather, we need to get our hands dirty—conduct experiments, do our own research, plan projects with other students—in order to really understand. The ideal is what Alfie Kohn calls “working with,” in which teachers and students pursue learning together through collaborative, interactive projects and activities.

Most Hampshire professors understand this and try to use more involved assignments to facilitate learning, but many of the classes I’ve taken here still seem to rely on “doing to,” despite the professor’s best intentions. For example, many professors make use of discussions, which would appear at first glance to be a perfect example of “working with.” Discussions are a participatory activity rather than a passive one, they’re collaborative, and they allow students to come to conclusions on their own.

In many classes, however, I’ve experienced discussions that felt more like lectures in disguise. When leading a discussion, it can be tempting to frame your questions and responses in a way that leads students to reaching a conclusion you already have in mind; but this turns the discussion into a “lecture in discussion’s clothing,” which can leave students feeling discouraged and deny the class the opportunity to explore unanticipated possibilities.

In order to fully embrace the “working with” model, professors need to treat their students as collaborators. In my hypothetical game design course, I would start the first class by asking the students to consider fundamental components of a game. Do games inherently have success/failure states? Do they need to have choices? What counts as a choice in the first place? As I would admit to the class, these are questions that I don’t know the answer to. In fact, they have no objectively “correct” answer—their purpose is not to be solved, but to encourage critical thinking about games. Because they cannot be answered, they put the professor and the students in the same position.

Over the course of the semester, I would transition away from leading the class and into a supportive role, helping students meet their own goals as they take on more complex projects. Positioning oneself as a collaborator in this way not only allows deeper, experiential learning, it gives students a chance to take ownership over their learning and leave the class with a real passion for the subject.

The Theory-Skill Spectrum

At its most basic, a class’s goal is to teach students some mix of theory and skills. “Theory” refers to a set of conceptual rules that can be used to understand a particular subject—symbolism and metaphor, the language of film, the laws of physics. “Skills” refers to competency in the various tasks associated with a subject—prose writing, camerawork, running experiments.

During my time at Hampshire, I’ve taken courses from all over the theory-skill spectrum. Classes that focus mostly on skill can be a lot of fun, since they involve active, get-your-hands-dirty learning, but they can also leave students feeling stranded. Say I’m taking a drawing class, and I’m struggling to draw hands; I’ll need to spend some time studying the theory behind drawing hands to get un-stuck, or else I’ll keep flailing around in the dark. On the opposite end of things, classes that teach mostly theory can feel stifling, often relying entirely on a “doing to” mode of teaching. Without any opportunity to put the course’s ideas to practice, they’ll feel irrelevant, and students won’t retain them.

The best classes fall right in the middle of the spectrum, and find a way to teach theory and skills at the same time. One of my favorite classes I’ve taken at Hampshire was Junko Oba’s “Musical Explorations.” Between each class, Junko asked us to write a bit of music within certain parameters, such as a predetermined chord progression or melodic structure. These assignments improved our skills as composers while giving us a more profound understanding of music theory concepts than we would ever be able to get from a textbook.

This method of blending theory and skill could be adapted into every subject by following these steps:

1. Identify the theory and skills associated with the subject. For example, my game design class would aim to teach the theory of game design (risk vs reward, complexity and depth, communicating through mechanics) and the skills of being a game designer (prototyping, playtesting, iterating).
2. Design activities in which students practice a skill guided by a prompt that leads them to engage with a theoretical concept. This prompt should be defined enough that students have to use theory to complete it, but it should also leave room for creativity and self-expression in the use of the skill. For one of these activities in my game class, I'd prompt students to create a simple game based around the concept of risk vs reward. Then, they'd test their games and investigate how the risks and rewards associated with different options affected players' decision making. Students would learn a key theoretical concept of game design and build their skills of prototyping and playtesting, all while having the freedom to make their own game.
3. Throughout the semester, increase the duration and scope of the activities so they become long-term projects. Students in my game class would spend the first third of the semester making tiny games to explore specific bits of theory, then would spend the next two thirds making longer, more complete games that require contemplating multiple theoretical concepts at once.

With these steps, I believe all classes—science and math, literature and history—can achieve a fusion of theory and skill as naturally as a studio art class.

Restructuring

Last, I'd like to discuss how courses are structured, both within a single week, and throughout the semester.

According to my calculations, about 77.8% of classes use a structure in which the vast majority of coursework happens outside of class, and class time is used to process or prepare for that work. The prevalence of this structure makes a lot of sense; a single class usually only lasts for under an hour and a half, which limits the sort of work students can complete in that time. But I think a lot of the work that tends to be assigned as “homework” could work better as condensed, in-class activities.

In my game class, for instance, I would want my students to create several “microgames” early in the semester to get used to thinking like a game designer. If I followed the standard formula, I would assign the microgames as homework to be completed between classes, and we would use class time to play and analyze them. But if I had the students make their microgames in class, I think the time limit would actually improve the assignment, turning it into the game design version of timed gesture drawing. At this early stage, short exercises are more valuable than long-term projects; if students have the time to agonize over every mechanic, they won't be training their game design muscles.

Once those muscles are trained, though, I would want my students to agonize over every mechanic, so I'd task them with making a more complete game in small groups over the latter half of the semester. While the microgame exercises worked great as in-class activities, a long-term game project takes so much time that it would need to be tackled outside of class. Now that the focus of the class has shifted, I'm going to need to find a new use for class time. I could just let students work on their projects during class, but because students will be in constant contact over Slack or Discord, and they'll have already delegated tasks between each other, two hour-and-a-half in-person meetings a week might

feel redundant. I could also use the class time to let the groups share their work with one another and give feedback, but the slow pace of game development would mean groups would show up to class on Wednesday with a nearly identical game to the one they brought on Monday.

The simplest solution would be to just not hold class as often. If we met every other week for playtesting and feedback sessions, students would be free to focus their attention on making their games, and they would have time to actually implement the feedback they receive in one session before the next one. Between classes, the professor would be able to hold more office hours, which students could use to seek support if they ran into any issues.

When deciding on the structure of a class, it's worth considering which tasks might benefit from being done in class, and which need to be done outside of class. During parts of the semester in which students are working on projects, classes will need to be altered to support them, which may reducing the number of classes.

The Necessity of Experimentation

I've presented these three points not because I think they're the only, or even the most important ways in which Hampshire classes could improve, but because they're a few of many. Hampshire brims with experimental potential. We have no required classes, no prescribed textbooks, and virtually no oversight over how and what professors teach—and that rules.

Last time I ended with a plea to students, so this time, I address Hampshire's faculty: please, get weird with it. Try out ways of teaching that you haven't tried before, that no one has tried before. Communicate your intentions clearly with your students. Ask them what's working and what isn't. It'll be messy, a bit chaotic, and sometimes a lot chaotic. But it's only through experimenting that Hampshire will become the best version of itself. 🧙‍♂️

What can Erik Hoel’s Aristocratic Tutoring tell us about how to teach at Hampshire?

by Ethan Ludwin-Peery 09F

Erik Hoel is a Hampshire alum (06F) who has recently been gaining some attention [as a Substack blogger](#). He is a Forbes 30 Under 30 winner in science (though [he called it an “awkward ego-fest”](#)), he [wrote a novel](#), and until recently he was a professor at Tufts University, when he quit his academic job to [focus on blogging and writing full-time](#).

But Erik’s most popular blog post isn’t about any of these things — it’s about what he calls “aristocratic tutoring”, in a post titled [Why we stopped making Einsteins](#). He followed this up with two more posts ([Objections to the importance of aristocratic tutoring](#) and [How geniuses used to be raised](#); there’s also a post [Childhoods of exceptional people](#) by Henrik Karlsson who did some of the research for Erik’s piece) which go into the idea in more detail.

Erik argues that education used to be very different, and for the most part, very better. He says,

If we go back in time tutoring had a much broader scope, acting as the main method of early education, at least for the elite. Let us call this past form aristocratic tutoring, to distinguish it from a tutor you meet in a coffeeshop to go over SAT math problems while the clock ticks down. It’s also different than “tiger parenting,” which is specifically focused around the resume padding that’s needed for kids to meet the impossible requirements for high-tier colleges. Aristocratic tutoring was not focused on measurables. Historically, it usually involved a paid adult tutor, who was an expert in the field, spending significant time with a young child or teenager, instructing them but also engaging them in discussions, often in a live-in capacity, fostering both knowledge but also engagement with intellectual subjects and fields.

Erik acknowledges that this system was deeply inequitable. For most of history, only the very rich had access to the resources necessary to tutor their children in this way.

Yet Erik also highlights how education has been changed from a system of rich, nuanced personal relationships into a system of mass production focused on creating obedient workers (less charitably, “the meatgrinder/factory model”). While mass education can be much more democratic, mass production is not exactly the goal here. A system with the accessibility of public schooling and the intimacy and profundity of the mentorship system would be pretty great, and I wonder if we could make that happen.

This seems especially possible at a school like Hampshire. Here students have direct access to knowledgeable faculty, here we would gawk at resume padding, here we attempt to engage one another in active discussion in addition to instruction.

Hampshire already has one of the key ingredients Erik mentions, “teaching that avoids the standard lecture-based system of unnecessary memorization and testing and instead encourages thinking from first principles, discussions, writing, debates, or simply overviewing the fundamentals together.”

Hampshire already has the same attitude to tests as aristocratically-tutored philosopher and mathematician Bertrand Russell, who said,

The attempt to acquire examination technique had led me to think of mathematics as consisting of artful dodges and ingenious devices and as altogether too much like a crossword puzzle. When . . . I emerged from my last mathematical examination I swore that I would never look at

mathematics again and sold all my mathematical books.

And Albert Einstein, who said,

The coercion [for examinations] had such a deterring effect that after I had passed the final examination I found the consideration of any scientific problems distasteful to me for an entire year.

Erik seems to think it is possible to get the best of both approaches. In his third essay on the subject, he says,

The goal of these investigations into aristocratic tutoring is to provide, albeit at a high level, a guide to its organization and philosophy, which could in theory be used to bring it back. Hopefully in a more equitable manner, e.g., in a way affordable to the middle class, perhaps by taking advantage of new technologies. While individual tutoring may never be affordable to everyone, frankly, elite education isn’t affordable anyways. ... It seems possible to dream of a different world.

So in this essay, I will examine Erik’s arguments around aristocratic tutoring. I will consider what lessons Hampshire can draw from this very old-fashioned but highly effective method of instruction. I will consider if we can adapt some of its successes while making the method more equitable and democratic. And I will ask, how good of a job am I doing at including these ideas in my classes?

Treat students as junior scholars; involve them in real work

One of the most striking elements of aristocratic tutoring is that tutors would often enlist students as collaborators in their work.

key ingredients [include] ... at some point the tutoring transitions toward an apprenticeship model, often quite early, which takes the form of project-based collaboration, such as producing a scientific paper or monograph or book... a final stage of becoming pupil to another genius at the height of their powers, often as young adulthood is only beginning

Some of the benefit of tutors seems to have come simply from exposing young scholars to the work of experts. Bertrand Russel had “a revolving door of many, possibly dozens, of tutors” who he learned from throughout his childhood and adolescence.

...tutors would also not only live with the family, but sometimes actually conduct scientific research on the estate grounds of Pembroke Lodge. Describing one such tutor, Russell writes:

He was a Darwinian, and was engaged in studying the instincts of chickens, which, to facilitate his studies, were allowed to work havoc in every room in the house. . .

But quite often tutors moved beyond exposing their student to their work, and into actually involving them in the project as collaborators. This tended to start gradually, with the student taking notes, as in Russel’s case with his family:

...early tutoring by Russell’s hyper-intellectual family often led to his notebooks being filled with adult pontifications and explanations, with the young tutored subject serving as stenographer.

And in the case of John Stuart Mill and his father:

....lessons were only a part of the daily instruction I received. Much of it consisted in the books I read by myself, and my father’s discourses to me, chiefly during our walks. . . I made notes on slips of paper while reading, and from these in the morning walks, I told the story to him. . .

But eventually the pupils went beyond taking notes and began to assist their tutors in earnest, first as junior collaborators and eventually as full-fledged collaborators, often at much younger ages than you might expect.

Mill, while still a pre-teen, had already begun to assist his father’s intellectual work (Blaise Pascal was a similar age when he began helping his father), signaling that at some point aristocratic tutoring should move into a more advanced stage wherein it resembles an apprenticeship or collaboration, much like the current relationship between professors and graduate students, but at an extremely young age.

The collaboration in Mill’s case was, essentially, that his father and he would go for walks to discuss a subject at length, with Mill taking notes, as he always had before, but now the walks concerned the same subject day after day, with his father expounding on various aspects of it. Later, Mill would turn over an organized draft of his notes with the purposeful goal of helping his father write a book on political economy.

...

Think of how naturally James Mill progressed his son via just their walks alone. First, his son was simply to take notes on whatever James felt like discussing, and they reviewed the notes the day after. Years passed. Eventually, this evolved into the apprenticeship model, wherein James returned to the same subject and his own son was then helping him write his next book.

What I’m hearing is that maybe I should take students on more walks.

For what it’s worth, Mill was very happy with his education, saying,

I do not believe that any scientific teaching ever was more thorough, or better fitted for training the faculties. . . Striving, even in an exaggerated degree, to call forth the activity of my faculties, by making me find out everything for myself, he gave his explanations not before, but after. . .

Erik provides several other examples, such as:

Consider Alexander Hamilton, who is canonically portrayed (like in the musical Hamilton) as being entirely self-made, an inexplicably intelligent freak of nature. But that’s not what actually happened. Alexander had experience as a bookkeeper for his mother, and after she died this led to a job as a clerk at an international trading firm, handling the details of the logistics for the owner, Nicholas Cruger, who took a special interest in training the boy.

We see a similar pattern for Bertrand Russel, though at a slightly later age:

By the time he was 18 Russell, like Mill, shifted from tutorship to apprentice-hood, acting as assistant and collaborator to the legendary older mathematician Alfred North Whitehead, eventually becoming a co-author on the world-historic *Principia Mathematica*.

There is a hint of this idea in modern education, but “project-based” classes usually fail this test

because the projects don’t actually matter. Projects are, at best, simulations of real work. A good place to start, perhaps, but you have to move on to real real work at some point. It’s very different to help an adult with their real work that may have real stakes for them and for the world.

This may be hard to match in school for a couple of reasons. While students may be able to help professors with their work and scholarship, it would probably take them a few months to get up to speed. That’s a problem when classes run on the semester system. It probably took Mill, Hamilton, and Russell more than 14 weeks to get familiar with their tutors’ projects to the point where they could make useful contributions. And while you might be able to train one or two students to be your apprentices to the point where they could be a real help to you, training 10 or 20 seems much more difficult.

But even if faculty can’t bring on very many students to assist with their actual research, it seems like there are things Hampshire could do to get students engaged in projects that at least resemble real work.

Obviously Division III is a great example of this, where students do attempt some kind of real work in their field. But Div III is not a great fit for what Erik describes, because it’s not an apprenticeship model; you are not working on someone else’s project, which has benefits that are different from working on an independent project. And in any case, students shouldn’t have to wait until Div III to help with some real work.

One of my classes this semester, CS-0232 “Hampshire College Butchers the Psychology Classics” is an attempt in this direction. In this course we are planning to replicate several classic psychology studies. While these studies are no longer real cutting-edge work, they were real cutting-edge work at the time they were published, and the replications will have real scientific value.

This is a good start, but I think you could do a lot more. I’ve considered teaching a statistics course where I give very freeform lectures on statistics (perhaps while taking walks?) and the only assigned work for the students is to write up their notes from my lectures as a stats textbook by the end of the semester.

If I taught this course multiple times, students in the later courses could either write a new textbook from scratch, or could revise the previous edition(s) as their major project. The potential benefits of having a textbook written by many hands of active learners, possibly revised over and over again by different years and different classes, seem enormous. I wouldn’t be at all surprised if some of these textbooks quickly became much better than everything else on the market.

There’s more precedent for this than you might think. The Analects were written by Confucius’s students, almost everything we know about Socrates comes from things his student Plato wrote, and as Erik notes,

...many of the books commonly attributed to Aristotle, like his Rhetoric, are really student-created notes originally produced for pedagogical effect rather than publication. What to us are monumental and world-historic works were merely tutoring exercises.

I think this would work especially well for skill-based courses like statistics, but the idea could probably be generalized to other topics without too much difficulty. I would encourage other professors to think about having their students produce a textbook, or some other kind of real scholarly work, as their final or ongoing project for a course. At the very least, it sounds much more interesting (to write and to read) than the average term paper.

Another kind of real work is teaching, and Erik points out how this was a common way for the aristocratically tutored to progress as junior scholars.

Mill himself was often put into the position of being an aristocratic tutor to his younger siblings.

“In my eighth year I commenced learning Latin, in conjunction with a younger sister, to whom I taught it as I went on, and who afterwards repeated the lessons to my father . . . I,

however, derived from this discipline the great advantage, of learning more thoroughly and retaining more lastingly the things which I was set to to teach; perhaps, too, the practice it afforded in explaining difficulties to others, may even at that age have been useful.”

This again is actionable information: it is helpful to put the child themselves in the role of tutor. It is difficult to imagine doing this to one so young in a standard lecture-based learning system—how do they know how to tutor, if they themselves have never experienced it?

Hampshire does a pretty good job with this. Some of you may not realize how unusual it is to let undergraduates be teaching assistants, but it’s a rare opportunity. Even so, the amount of teaching a TA actually gets to do varies wildly between classes and professors. Some professors ask their TAs to do little more than answer emails for them, while others make TAs a more active part of the class. Hampshire does a good job at providing the opportunity for students to teach, but without a real commitment from the professors to let them teach, it won’t happen.

For my own part, I can say that I currently have 4 TAs for two classes, and my goal is for them to take a very active role in management and class projects.

Independent studies can also be a good way to treat students as junior scholars. This very essay is part of an independent study where Jay Poggi is trying to do the real scholarly work of writing essays to inform and influence Hampshire’s academic policy. Not only is Jay writing his own essays, I’m writing some essays of my own and having Jay edit mine, including this one. That’s a double feature right there — Jay does serious work of his own by writing his essays and does serious collaboration with me by editing mine.

Let students fail

Part of the educational benefit of doing real work is that real work opens you up to the possibility of real failure. This is daunting for the obvious reasons but ultimately good for the student. Failure, and learning how to deal with failure, is extremely educational.

For example, Erik quotes John Stuart Mill as saying,

My father never permitted anything which I learnt to degenerate into a mere exercise of memory. He strove to make the understanding not only go along with every step of the teaching, but, if possible, precede it. Anything which could be found out by thinking I never was told, until I had exhausted my efforts to find it out for myself. As far as I can trust my remembrance, I acquitted myself very lamely in this department; my recollection of such matters is almost wholly of failures, hardly ever of success.

I’m not sure how good of a job Hampshire does at letting students fail. Students in my classes seem very anxious about failure, which suggests to me that they don’t have much experience with it. Failure is perceived, at least, as catastrophic. So perhaps more could be done to allow students to fail without extrinsic consequence.

For my own part, I think I do an ok job with this. I often assign students readings that are somewhat more advanced than what they’re used to. This lets them have some experience of failure, of failing to get everything out of a reading, failing to understand the entire thing. And my course “Hampshire College Butchers the Psychology Classics” is kind of built around the idea. Students are not expected to do a perfect job on these replications, I called it “Butchers” for a reason.

Encourage students to do work you don’t see

Something that surprised me in Erik’s writing was this paragraph, which I think is unusually insightful:

By 11 and 12, Mill was writing histories and studies, essentially mini-essays and papers, which his father encouraged but did not read, to spare Mill an overly-critical eye. Again I think this is actionable information: the biggest danger for a well-meaning and talented tutor is to become the authoritative critic, which can suck the joy out of intellectual creativity, replacing it with dread.

My takeaway from this is that it is good to encourage students to have conversations and, even better, to do work that you as the teacher will never see.

The Omen itself actually does a pretty good job at this. While some faculty do read The Omen (hello), in general it is understood to be a non-academic space where intellectual creativity can flourish without the sucking influence of authoritative critics like myself.

However, classes and the administration don’t seem to do anything additional to encourage this practice. This isn’t exactly a criticism, because I’m not sure how I could design a class that would encourage students to do a bunch of work of their own outside class that I would never see. How would I incentivise that, how could it possibly go in an eval?

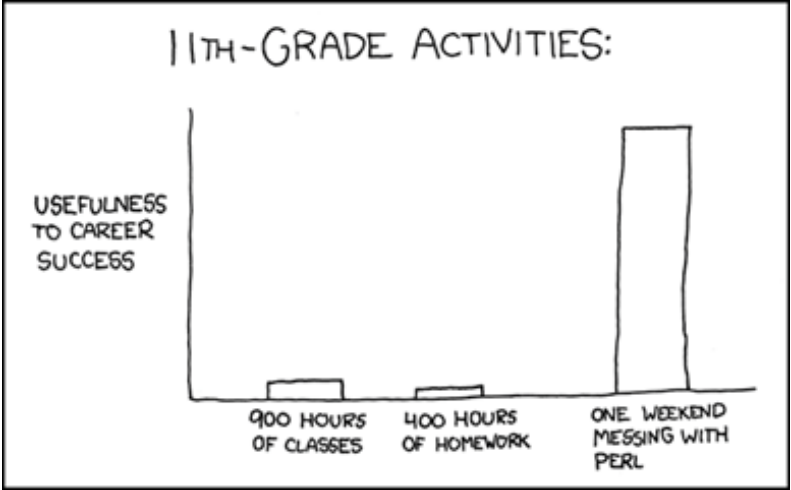
Less teaching overall

Perhaps the only way for a class to encourage students to do more independent work on their own is to give them less classwork overall, and trust that they will use their free time to work on things that they intrinsically care about.

Britain has produced a range of remarkably gifted multidisciplinary scientists and scholars who are sometimes described as polymaths. ... Russell commented that the development of such gifted individuals required a childhood period in which there was little or no pressure for conformity, a time in which the child could develop and pursue his or her own interests no matter how unusual or bizarre.

—Carl Sagan

That was my experience as a Hampshire student. I’ve spent a lot of time recently talking with my friends from Hampshire about what we remember about being students, and one thing we noticed is that we barely remember our classes at all. We discovered that, for the most part, each of us had no clue what the others studied. We did a lot of impressive work, and learned a lot during our time at Hampshire, but most of what ended up being important in the long term came from student groups and from work we did on our own, for our own amusement.



For comparison, consider XKCD 519

Karlsson, who helped Erik with these essays, says, “immersion in boredom is also a universal in the biographies of exceptional people ... the intellectual obsessions that grew into their life’s work often grew out of this boredom.” If this argument is true, then Hampshire may be suffering from a strategic boredom deficit.

As one story, Karlsson notes this about James Clerk Maxwell (who discovered that electricity and magnetism are the same force):

His parents tried hiring a tutor, but Maxwell, when hit over the head by his tutor, ran out into a lake and refused to come back in until his parents fired his tutor. Instead of being tutored, his first ten years were spent reading novels with his mother, discussing farm improvements with father, climbing trees, doing mischief, and exploring the fields and the woods and the birds and the beasts.

Erik essentially argues for this as well, saying,

...key ingredients [include] plenty of free time, i.e., less tutoring hours in the day than traditional school...

As an example, he mentions:

...it was Russell’s grandmother who kept the revolving door of tutors turning, perhaps, Russell himself speculates, to not diminish her own hold on him. At the same time, she was fearful of overworking him, and kept Russell’s official learning time as short as possible.

I think I mostly do a good job with this. It’s true that I do assign a lot of reading. This is somewhat unfair or biased of me because I like to read and I read very quickly, so what might be a lot of reading to the average student is not very much reading to me. But on the other hand I assign very little homework. I think it works out to be a reasonable trade.

It seems like Hampshire could do a lot better in this. We had a lot of free time when I was a student, but students today consistently seem overworked and overwhelmed. I’m not sure what to do to fix this because I’m not sure what changed, or where the pressure is coming from. But professors and the administration should consider what they can do to give students more free time to spend on personal projects. I genuinely think that letting students put their skills to the test in their free time, in venues that are not monitored or evaluated, is a way for our classes to have more impact. 🤖

GET BLASTED, IDIOT!!!

PENIS BLAST!

PENIS BLAST!

PENIS BLAST!

PENIS BLAST!

PENIS BLAST!

PENIS BLAST!



An Ode to Lube
aka
Your Ultimate Lube 101 Guide

By Kae Klepitskaya

Ah, yes, that overnight bag. You know the one you keep on-hand for that promising night out – an extra toothbrush, a mini-comb, a night’s-dose of your medication, condoms, and, of course lube.

Lube? Do I really need that?

Absolutely!! Lube is a must in your sex kit. It makes all kinds of sex more fun, more pleasurable, and safer for everyone involved. It can help reduce pelvic pain, prevent injury, and reduce friction. Lube is an absolute necessity(!) for sex involving the anus, since the tissues are more delicate and not self-lubricating. Lube is an essential ingredient for *safer* and *better* sex.

Lube is an essential sexual health and pleasure item for all types of sex, solo or partnered, and folks of all genders and bodies.

Great! But what kind of lube should I get?

Of course, the lube market is full of all kinds of selection, so tune in to the guide below for help finding the right lube for you. 🐻

Rising Dawn
by Zuki

It was the first day of class, when I saw her. It wasn’t the cold gust of January winds that caught my attention as she opened the door, nor her casual confidence as she walked in like she had been here a hundred times before, had stitched the textbooks in our feeble hands herself. No, if I’m being candid. It was the involuntary sharp intake of breath when I laid my eyes upon her. The semi-unconscious flexes in my cheeks and throat, as dopamine laxed my lips. Their skin was ebony, like dark polished wood. Perhaps more like painted New England trees. Her locs cascaded down her back. Past the opening of her satin blouse, that ripples past her curves. It was a simple fact that they were both beautiful and handsome. As I trailed my gaze up the veins in her toned forearms, past the gold chain necklace caressing their neck, onto her divinely chiseled jawline, I felt myself fall deeper into the siren’s trace. That was before my uncontrollable eyes snapped onto theirs. I felt a jolt of shock run through me, prickling my face. I pull my eyes away so not to be rude, my entire manner and fluidity of thought irrecoverably altered. I ignored the dull pulsing ache to look back. The door closes, just as the professor is about to begin.

“Welcome to the Feminist Future and History of Erotica. Please pass around the course syllabus...”
The professor’s voice is lost in the footsteps behind me and in the increasing beating of my heart as I felt their presence draw near.

The hairs on my neck lifted as they sat next to me.
“Something untraditional about this course is that we will be starting with present day films, literature and theory, and working backwards...”
She sits forward in her seat, their hands grazing their knees.

“We are trying to figure out if modern media represents female desire and the desire of marginalized communities accurately but also in a way that transcends the limitations of our capitalist heteropatriarchal reality and perhaps even the limitations of arborescent thinking...”

She fiddles with rings on her fingers. Flexes them. I press my own fingers into my pen and begin doodling her in the back of my planner.

“Essentially, the main question is: can women own their own sexuality without it catering to and serving the male gaze? Or are we still stuck in this limbo of objectification and self-expression. If so, how do we get out, without repeating the failures of past activists and theorists, if there were any?”

The room is packed. Normally a course like this would be a smaller class of eighteen students. But the professor is too famous and the course too enticing, at least at our liberal arts college. Despite all this, the low snare drum of mechanical and manual clicks, I felt their shoulder press against mine.

“Hey”. Their voice sounded like molasses.
“Hey”

“We have to get into pairs and swap notes on the reading”
“Yeah sure” I reached into my bag for the textbook before handing it to them. Our fingers touch and I nearly drop the book from how cold they are. The cold metal rings sending chills down my spine. She looks embarrassed but only for split second before returning to her cool confidence. “Thank you,” she says, her eyes never leaving mine, a small smile playing on her lips. We are interrupted by the instructor asking the class to share their thoughts. She looked down at my notes, and smiled a secret smile at me before lifting her hand to talk”

“Yes, you, introduce yourself “
“My name is Katlego Moloi. She/They. They/she. I think that Audre Lorde offers up a new way to interpret the erotic.
“How so?”

“You see the erotic is a deeply spiritual connection birthed within us with everything we do and feel. From the beginning formations of a sensation to our strongest, clearest desires. It’s about unabashedly pulling from your inner creative and passionate life force. Instead of submitting to the indoctrinated lifestyle of self-abnegation, its about living your truth and in personal alignment, even if it upturns the establishment or previous reality”

I saw her lips move, full of herself and thoughts, the way I wished to be full of her. Her relaxed posture. Her sharp tongue. Her cunning way with words. Her side profile was stunning even under the fluorescent lights. Their voice sang like a canary.

“Truly, the erotic is the most powerful and beautiful form of honesty.”

They are what poets write about.

Time passes as the lecture goes on. I even lifted my hand to answer a question. I felt her eyes skate over my face.

“You will be getting into pairs. Starting from everyone seating on the right, please turn to your left. That’s your partner. Then, in the third vertical row, look to your left, that’s your partner. So on and so forth. Your assignment is to watch the film, “The Handmaiden” and answer the questions listed on the syllabus below before the next class”.

She turned to me and flashed her first wicked smile at me. “Hey, Partner”

“Hey”

“You’re Imani right? Imani White?”

“Yep, that’s me”

They lean forward slightly “You’re so smart”. The genuineness in their voice was gold.

“I know”, I flirted.

They smiled, impressed. “Then how about we go through the readings tonight? Then we can watch the film at my place tomorrow night?”

“Sounds like a plan”. I felt a rush go through me.

“Are you going to lunch? Let me walk with you”

I smiled to myself as I gathered my things. “Can I see this?” Before I could stand up, she reached out from her seat to touch my cross necklace. Her fingertips fingered the chain link, grazed the nape of my neck. We were the only two left in the lecture room. “It’s beautiful”. Their face was more beautiful. “Do you need some help?” They extended their arms, grabbing one of my bags in one hand and clasping my hand in the other. My fingers brushed her semi-colon tattoo.

“Wait let’s go to the bathroom first”, I say on our way to the student-run cafe. I go in first and notice that I’m on my period. Crap. Gosh I wanted to scream from frustration. Luckily I had a pad with me. I came out of the stall and Katlego was drying her hands. Our eyes met in the mirror.

“Do you need help?”

Surely I’m imagining all of this, the tension. Regardless we were the only ones in the bathroom.

“May I?”

I began to nod, before my sense of self embarrassment returned.

“No, it’s okay”

“Okay, I’ll be outside then”

She said it so casually, it almost felt rude. I imagined her tying the ribbons on the back of my corset. Their fingers grazing the spine of my back.

“Actually, could you help me with the last bit”

She came by my side so swiftly then, only a hint of desperation in the heave of her chest. She tied the last bit of ribbon into a bow at the small of my back, I thought about how grateful I was for my outfit today.

We walked to the campus cafe, only to find it closed.

“I know a cosy little cafe nearby”

“Sure”

We walked towards their car, briskly and huddled together in the cold. Only because it was cold, did they tolerate me. Placed their arm around me. I smelt cinnamon and honey. Their coat brushed my crimson face.

“So why did you choose History of Erotica?” They asked when we had settled into their car. The steam still clung to the walls and our skin. How do I tell them it’s because I’m horny? “I’m officially majoring in Creative Writing and secretly majoring in Gender Studies. How about you?”

They smirk, their eyes glistening with danger, “I’m a history buff. Plus I wanted to piss off my parents”, their eyes pointedly flickered to Christian necklace, while the car paused at a red light.

“Father issues?” I joked.

“More like existential issues” She playfully remarked before driving on.

We finally arrived at a local cafe that they suggested after we saw that the campus one was closed. The bell chimed as we walked in. Gentle jazz music played in the background as we headed towards a more private booth with a charging station. We sank into the cushioned seats. There was no need to sit this close together here. We shared my laptop and took turns reading the explicit scenes. My voice was breathy and revealing, skimming through flesh. Her voice was raspy and low in my ear so that no one else would hear. It was so quiet, besides her voice, that you could hear a pin drop. I tried to keep a straight face. Sometimes she would lift her voice up a little, her eyes scanning my face, because softly chuckling and dropping back down.

“Any ideas for this question?” I breathed when we finished reading.

“Mmh” They leaned closer, closer than they had previously been. “Wow, you smell amazing, what is this smell - can I?” I nodded and they gently burrowed their face into my neck. “ You should wear this all the time, or tell me the name of it-” They stumbled. They jolt back, embarrassed, almost like they had fallen into a trace. “ahem, yeah thanks”. Their normally relaxed eyes, had been awakened with a realization. I could have almost sworn that their color had shifted.

Quickly the conversation fell back into a natural rhythm, that swayed from coursework on hand, reaching in other worlds, history, culture, religion, our lives and our trauma. I told her how I wished to be a poet. She wanted to be a historian. How I have dreams continuously. How she craves to be immortalized yet depises living. How I carry the burden of my parent’s marriage and their legacy on my shoulders. How her real parents died and her adoptive parents sucked. How our self love has been built from the ashes of our past.

“Do you think you could love again?”

Her eyes were vulnerable and golden as she answered “Yes. Unfortunately I have no control over it. The thing that pushes me open. Feeling understood. Falling. “ She wanted to say more, but held herself back.

It was time to go home. We gathered our stuff and headed back to the car. This time, Katlego had given me their jacket as they walked a friendly distance away. The air pricked with electricity and I was torn that we weren’t as close physically despite our lively and then deep conversation. She had wiped my tears, I had given her my water when she couldn’t stop laughing. We shared a bizarre unexplainable and magnetic bond. I was almost certain that we were cells that yearned to be one. But I must have been imagining it, with the polite distance being maintained. We finally made it back to my dorm. I reached up to them to give them a hug. It was warm and soul energizing and intoxicating. Their hands slowly shifted downwards before going back up to their polite spot. Please be rude. But the hug ended and they left without another word.

The next class was on Wednesday and I was fuming. We remained silent, despite the heat that prickled my skin. The professor droned on about ways to form intimacy. When our hands touched while they passed me the paper, I felt the coldness of their fingers and trembled. Memories of ice and hot summer nights flooded my mind like an unleashed dam. Unfortunately I could not rid myself of my affinity towards her. I felt so spiritually connected to her, so aware of their movements. This was a bond that would not untie easily. Before I knew it class was over and I rushed out, coat in hand, frustrated.

“Imani?”

Their voice sent tingles through my brain. I stopped against my best judgment. They came closer to me and I inhaled. What spell did she have me under?

“Hey, Imani”, I ignored the stirring her voice caused, “Are you avoiding me?”

She’s curious, confident and concerned.

“Yeah” I couldn’t lie to her. “Why?”, they asked as they gestured us towards the side, their hand on my shoulder. Don’t say it out loud. Their thumb brushed my skin as they looked at me with genuine concern.

“Why did you suddenly become cold?”

It came out. I watched her face transform into happiness and genuine relief. They shook their head.

“Well, I could flip the question, but the truth is I was scared. I am scared. I don’t normally open up and I’m worried with you. But I’ve realized that it is a worse feeling to not talk to you.”

“I’m worried too. Not sure if I want to piss off my parents that much” She smiled at that. “Hey, do you want to watch the assigned film together?”

“The Handmaiden?” Her eyes glowed with mischief. I wish I could trace the crinkles near her feathered eyebrows and the outline of her cheeks.

“Yeah, we could be study buddies. My room at 8?”

“Yeah, I’d love to learn with you”.

They arrived that night at my door in crisp fitted white pants and white sweater with leaking red hearts. When they walked in, they slid past me, so close that their sleeve accidentally brushed the hem of my lacy skirt. So close that I could smell their expensive men’s cologne.

In their other hand, they gripped the other required reading for the night, “Carmilla” by Sheridan Le Fanu. Their gold rings glinted in the tv light. Their nails were short.

We sat on top of the couch. One the perks of being an R.A were the larger rooms that were convertible. I connected the computer to the TV screen, clicked the link and watched the film begin playing.

The tension was palpable amongst the characters and Katlego and I. The air was shifting with intrigue and suspense and hidden desire. Desire that began to spill over the sides as the film twisted on. At some point of the film she turned to me, placed their hand on my knee and asked, “Are you okay?”. All I could muster was nod, a wrap around their arm and lean on their shoulder. I had been flinching at some of violence. They must have noticed. Eventually another sex scene ensued, a lengthier one. I felt my shoulders relax involuntary as my breathing changed. I felt the shift in them. We exchanged hidden glances. Their turn. My turn. Their eyes, shifting in the dark. Her lips were pink and I wished to make them red.

“Honestly, I want to try something out” I whispered, barely.

“Why?” They struggled to maintain a steady voice.

“For learning purposes”

“Hmh, for learning purposes?” Gosh their voice was sexy.

“Yeah”, I brushed my foot against her ankle.

“What do you want to try”

“The source material.” Greater pressure was applied to my inner thigh as I slowly moved their hand up. I was almost certain her nails had been blunt and bare before we had started the movie. Now her crimson talons lay in the open for all to see. They looked at me then. Her face remained stoic with only her eyes dripping with a tinge of worry. Nonetheless, our faces continued itching forward, in a spellbinding haze.

“I can’t”

Our foreheads were touching. Our breathes intermingled. I brushed their nose with mine, “okay” and began to move away. They cupped my face, leaning slightly back. Their fingers traced my face slowing, as if trying to mark the moment. “You are so beautiful”. Her hands felt through my curly braids, “they are just the most beautiful hue”. Their eyes had turned a reddish brown. Amber in the dark. The pieces were falling together and

I was pushing them under the woolen rug. I needed some relief first.

“Kiss me, or at least don’t taunt me”

“Only if you let me tell you something first”

“I know what you are, that’s not what concerns me”. The picture was made whole before me. Five College lore had told stories about vampires before. It was an open secret that the consortium was established to educate and hide all who were drawn to the supernatural beacon in Pioneer Valley. The textbook, the eyes, the nails. All telltale signs. The only law that kept the peace was to not kill.

Their eyes were perplexed and on edge. They searched my eyes before treading carefully. “What’s wrong?”

The full weight of their attention was overwhelming. I looked away. Traced the outline of the cross pendant. Sigh, embarrassed.

“To be honest, I have been hurt before... and I just think humans were not meant to love each other that much. I’m worried it’s blasphemy to care about you the way I do, for you to consume my thoughts more than God”

They gaze was somber at first but then it softened. They rubbed their nose against mine, “Firstly, I am not human,” they chuckled. “Secondly, I could give you heaven on earth”

I pressed closer to her. Anchored my hand around her ear and into her hair. Tilted her neck. Kissed her under her chin. Felt the contractions in her neck. “Not if I go to hell”, I quietly joked.

“What do you want?” They whispered unevenly.

I couldn’t think straight. I was drunk on lust. Hypnotized by the soul connection I felt towards them. I planted a kiss lower upon their neck.”One night.” I breathed.

“One night?”

I shifted my position on the couch onto her. My legs wrapped around their waist

“Yes.” My forehead against theirs. One of their hands gently gripped my thigh, the other moved from my lower back, onto sliding up my chest.

“Perhaps we could renegotiate at a later stage?” I was lost in our tantric breathing.

“Depends. Kiss me”

“How?”

“Kiss me like how that poem says. Kiss me like you are offering me immortality.”

She brought my face forward towards her, to the smallest measurement between our lips. She kissed the corners of my mouth. Returned to her position. Dangling her lips in front of me, breath exchanged. Then their lips surged forward in a firm, yet soft, thirsty embrace. There was a stirring in my chest. Then there was a momentary release, before again and again. Our lips danced, before morphing into a more clumsy, desire filled mess. My head was gently led to lay down. Their lips performed curtains above us. Slight tongue sent shivers down my bites. Sparks were being sent off in my brain. It was the kind of kiss that I could not quench myself off. Their hands were feverish, sending shockwaves up and down my waist. My body reacts instinctively, aching towards them. My toes began to curl. Her touch was quickly becoming too conservative.

“Bed?”

I nodded. Then in a split-second, I was on the bed.

“Let me know if you want to swap, okay?” Their lips fell into their face in the most beautiful way. Then they proceeded to kiss me, in a more tender, in some ways more intimate, way. It was sweet and made me dizzy. We flopped onto our side.

They broke the kiss to smile at me. Smoothed the crease between my eyebrows. “You are so beautiful”. Kissed up my nose and forehead. “Beautiful, Beautiful”. On my eyelids and cheeks. Along my jawline, into the crook of my neck. Gently maneuvering me as their mouth trailblazed a new holy path.

They whispered in my ear, “On your stomach please. I nodded and kissed them first. They then straddled

me from behind, lifted my shirt so I felt the cool air as my skin eagered for their touch. The side of their face grazed mine, one hand placed firmly beside our heads, the other hand gently tracing circles that sent fire throughout my back.

“May I kiss up your back?”

“Yes please”

They moved backwards, my skin reacting to every movement. They began to kiss up my back, from the plane that separated my ass from my back. I felt my lacy skirt shift as their hands brushed my hips, while their lips made it up to the back of my neck, my hair sprawled as the pillow.

“Mmh, it feels so good”. I felt a small smile in the kisses that came afterwards. I could hardly take the slow pace any longer. I stretched like a cat before pressing my back flesh against the front of them, almost like a lap dance position but on our knees, before I kissed them ferociously, every cell in me, vibrating and alive. “Why haven’t you taken my clothes off yet?” I breathed, a bit desperately. The embarrassment hit then, but they were swifter. “Don’t be embarrassed” They kissed me hard on the mouth. “ I love it when you talk to me”.

Their hands clinged to my waist. I guided one of their hands to my breast. A slight moan in my mouth escapes.

They break the kiss, “communicate with me”.

“Kiss my shoulders”. Their lips grazed against my modified Song of Achilles tattoo. Almost as if her mouth had woven every letter of the sentence into my skin; “They are half of my soul, as the poets would say”. Their mouth got lost in the other side of my neck, as I pushed their fingers towards my thong. They licked my neck and snapped my thong. I gasped, leaning my neck backwards. The words rushed out of me without thinking.

“Bite me”

They stopped for a moment. Gently tilted my chin towards them. Amber eyes kept eye contact with mine. Our chests heaved. “I need to think”. I wrapped my arms around their neck, interlocked our bodies as their hands held my back. They leaned forward to kiss me again. “Remember, you’re thinking”. A sigh followed before they looked back at me, mischief alight in their irises. Their fangs protracted.

“I can brush my teeth against your skin but I can’t bite”

This could be a bad idea. I wanted to stop the madness and give into it too.

“Like knife play? What’s the precaution?”

They reached into their back pocket. “It’s a requirement by law to carry this around. Heals you instantly if I make a mistake” I took the blue antidote in my hands and placed it on my bedside table.

“And what’s your weakness?”

“Silver”

“Permission to wrap the necklace around your neck if I experience pain?”

“Granted. Permission to rip top off?”

“Permission to take top off and to rip stocking in the center, granted”

“I love it when you talk.” They said, before removing my “Fuck, I’m gay” top in one fluid motion. Their pupils dilated as they drank me in, panning from the waistband of my mini skirt to my relatively big breasts. When their eyes finally reached my face, their irises were red gemstones.

“I want to take your bra off”. It was barely a whisper. I turned around and their fingers fiddled with the strap. My heart pounded against my chest. This was the most vulnerable I had ever been. I turn back around when I feel the release, clasping the cups of the bra to my chest. I looked back into their eyes. They gulped.

“Only if you want to”.

I wanted to. I dropped the bra. Their hands gingerly reached towards them and began palming my breasts.

“I need to add more words to my vocabulary to describe your beauty.”

“Stop it.” I blushed. My sexy persona disappeared in their unabashed authenticity.

“You’re stunning.” They said while touching my boots, stomach and shoulders.

“ I was worried that my boobs might be too small” I thought about all the porn I had seen.

“Perfect size” They replied earnestly. They kneaded my nipples between their fingers. The strength shown in their tone arms was so attractive.

“What are you thinking?”

“How lucky I am. How hot you are. Gosh, I want to give you so much pleasure. Anything you want. I’m yours.”

“Mmh” I leaned my head back. They moved their head slowly closer to my chest, expectantly waiting for my consent. I bit my lip and nodded my head. They began sucking on my tit. My brain was unexpectedly exploding. Before moving to to the other one, they took a step back off the bed, turned around and took their sweater off. The muscles in their tone back were mesmerizing. I moved off the bed to touch their back. Their muscles flexed under my touch. I started kissing down their back.

“Let me remove my binder first”

“Can I unbuttoned your pants while you do that?”

“Yeah”

I knelt down before them. Worked my fingers through the button and zip. Stroked their legs on the outside fabric before tugging it down. I kissed their inner thigh.

“Gosh you are so sexy, I want to eat you”

“Not yet. You first. Come here.”

Their command put me in a trace. I came up and kissed them in a way that surprised myself. Flung my arms around them in brash embrace. Chest flushed against chest. I gently bit their lips. Then their earlobe. Then planted hickeys across their chest.

“Imani,” They hissed uncontrollably.

“Yea?” I felt intoxicated in their scent and in their taste.

“Um..” Were they stammering?

“Communicate” I teased gently.

They smirked. “I need your skirt off”

“I need your boxers off”.

Faster than I thought possible, they removed their last bit of clothing and stood in complete nude. Their body was glorious. We frantically touched each other, never growing old, discovering new pathways and connections. They palmed my ass while I dragged my finger along their V cut. I gently bounced on the bed and felt their hands praise me. They worshiped my love handles. Licked my neck. Decorated my collarbone with hickeys. I removed my necklace and held it in my hand. The air was electrified with danger. The bites broughy pleasure to both of us. Therein layed the dilemma.

“You know what else I want to try?” I told them.

“What?” They rasped.

“Exhibitionism”

“How?”

“Open the curtains” We were on the third floor facing a row of trees. It was the dead of night. Their eyes twinkled in a way that suggested that they wanted to try it too.

“Okay.” They quickly opened the curtains and returned to me. They kissed down my stomach and lowered my stocking. Then went to my ankles, lifted them high and wide before pressing their mouth teasingly slow, on each side towards my pussy.

“Wait” I breathed.

They stopped. Their abruptness felt like cold air. I mustered up the courage to speak, despite their concerned eyes.

“It’s my time of the month”
They smiled. “So?” They tried to retract their fangs innocently but their eyes gave them away.
“If you going to eat me out, then you have to wear the necklace”
“Hmm, like insurance of sorts. Okay I’ll give you head towards the end. Of the first half at least,” they murmured.
I smiled “What will you do first”
“I’ll rip your stockings”. They proceeded to rip it down center, my thong on full display. I ached to be touch.
“Hand me the flower on your bedside table”.
I handed them the rose.
“I’m going to show you how I’m going to do it.” They popped off their rings while looking directly at me. Slid them onto my fingers, starting with my ring finger first. “A commitment to not harm you and only give you my best”. It took my breath away.
They came up onto the bed and layed right beside me. They blew on the rose. Began gliding their fingers on the outside. Kissed up the stem. Gently pulled the petals apart. Massaged the inner lining. Brushed the very tips with the lightest pressure. Brushed the petals in an increasingly circular motion. Press a finger into the center as the thumb rubbed some of the other petals. Inserted two, moved them back and Forth.
The air was thick. They submerged their voice into the space. “Then,” at barely a whisper, “ I would lick you in a similar fashion, at the most my teeth would brush you with your consent. There would be a relief of any cramps, a significantly reduced flow for about ten to 20 minutes. So then finally I would fuck you or make love to you. Either skin to skin or toy. How would you like it?”
I made them look at me. “Skin to skin. What do you prefer?”
“To make love to you. What are your other thoughts?”
I kissed them gleefully.
“Do I still get all the benefits with a dental dam?”
They smiled at me. Gosh, their smile was beautiful. “Yeah, it just might take longer,” they laughed. I reached out to touch their face.
“Good.”

They went to the bathroom to wash their hands. When they returned, they moved back between my legs. I gave them the vanilla dental dam and they placed it over me. They removed the rest of my stockings. Then they blew gently, traced the outline of my labia. When their finger brushed over me, we became aware of how wet I was. They stroked my centerfold gently and I blossomed under their touch. Their lips finally touched my clitoris. Sucked gently. At first I hissed and then I began to pant. At my command, their teeth grazed my folds through the protection. They wore my necklace. They did as if they loved it. My muscles began to contract as they kissed, sucked and licked me. Suddenly they came up.
“Organism now or Switch”
I was curious, despite my body screaming at me to continue full force. Their hand traced circles around my sensitive era.
“Switch” I managed through breaths and intense pleasure.
They removed the necklace and gently propped themselves between my legs. Maneuvered our limbs until they became intertwined in the most intimate way. They then began to ride first.
I tried not to scream so loud. “Fuck!” My head was thrown back against the pillow. The pleasure was overwhelming, Greater what I thought possible. Really it was the fact that they were hovering over me. Their locs cascaded over us like a curtain. I tried kissing them but it was a haphazard, beautiful mess. The grinding became faster and more desperate. Our bodies sliding back and forth. Their warmth and their body and their face in

mine. Breathing entangled. I whined about how long it was taking and indulged in the parts of my body that I never knew I could explode. I started to orgasm wildy, in the best way possible. Our sounds were a symphony. I had never felt so deeply connected to someone. Our bodies and our souls merging into. They cum after me. We come down from the high, hearts racing, side by side on the bed. I knew in that moment that I wanted to do it again. Even though dawn began to rise. 🐺

Man Named Fox

by Jacqueline-Delphine Laffitte

I gave a beast my white rose then he reciprocated,
My compensation with prose my heart desecrated,
Was he a beast or a man his arms were webs of fine silk,
Sly as fox cool as a fan were his smooth words, not his milk.

He sleeps with me in this nest next day looks at the paper,
Then a waitress’s big chest then drinks tea from the cafe.
I am slave to the freeway but my heart wants to settle,
Like him, in place, I can’t stay all I am to him is a pebble.

When we fuck I see colors I step out of black and white,
He foolishly yelps hollers pins me down he wants to bite,
Tells me he fucks everyone, hypersexual-junkie,
He only wants to have fun, why do I want him to love me?

What I want does not exist he never takes me out for food,
Promises me then plans are missed, he makes time so I am screwed.
Yes, I fall for idiots clearly I can do better,
Fox is ambiguous, his cock is a love letter. 🐺

three years apart, you and i

by Leo Zhang

Jyuto remembered the first time he ever saw Tsuyuki angry. It wasn’t a common sight; Tsuyuki was always smiling, always brushing things off with a laugh that sounded like a silver bell. Jyuto was getting to a point where he wasn’t even sure if Tsuyuki was capable of anger, because he was always endlessly patient with everyone who spoke to him. And it seemed like no matter how rude Jyuto was to him, he never got more than a giggle and a backhanded tease in return.

The night that Jyuto first saw Tsuyuki’s anger, Tsuyuki had been assigned to a case that crossed between Kobe and Yokohama. A lot of his cases tended to be like this, Jyuto learned, and he loathed it. He didn’t want to see Tsuyuki that often, and he was sure Tsuyuki felt the same. Why would he want to see the annoying man who made his job ten times harder just by being alive, and why would Tsuyuki want to see the officer who arrested him twice on false charges? They hated seeing each other, being reminded of each other’s existences—but they had jobs, and they loved their jobs, so what could they do?

It was a day where they were the last two people left in Jyuto’s section of the station, both of them being workaholics who ignored their own limits. Tsuyuki was clearly exhausted, but he insisted on staying with Jyuto, because *I have to make sure you’re not planning to pull some illegal shit on your own in here*. He had phrased it as a joke, but Jyuto had to click his tongue in immense irritation, because he had, in fact, been planning to pull some illegal shit on his own. It was sort of his thing, digging into people’s pasts and using their own acquaintances against them. But with that damn Tsuyuki here, he couldn’t exactly do that, and he suspected Tsuyuki knew.

Alone in the office, they were free to sling passive aggressive jabs at each other with no fear of being unprofessional in front of other police officers. It was easy for them, as easy as tossing a ball back and forth. It was easy for Jyuto to call him an obnoxious bitch, and it was easy for Tsuyuki to hit back, though he hid his disdain for Jyuto behind layers of pleasantries and a silver tongue. His voice remained light and airy, as if none of it mattered to him, as if he truly wasn’t bothered. It pissed Jyuto off, but at the very least, the verbal war they waged was enough to keep him going, was entertaining enough to keep his metaphorical feet moving until it was close to midnight, and he finally closed his laptop.

“Done?” Tsuyuki asked. He sounded bored.

“Yeah, so you can go now.”

“I’ll walk you out.” He gave Jyuto a grin, one that glinted at the corners. “Aren’t I such a gentleman?”

Jyuto sighed with more than a hint of disgust, violently pushing his chair into his desk. It hit the edge of the table with a loud clatter. “I wish being annoying was a crime so I could get you locked up for life.”

Tsuyuki laughed, sticking to Jyuto’s side as he walked. “You wanna arrest me that bad? But I’m such a good citizen, *officer*. Not a single blot on my record, so good luck getting me behind bars, bunnyboy.”

Jyuto felt his brow twitch. “Oh, I’m sure I could find some way to make something stick.”

“Oh yeah? Enlighten me. How would you do that?”

“I don’t know, maybe I could conveniently find out that your motorcycle license is expired. Or maybe you violated company policy while here in Yokohama. Maybe I’ll find footage of you entering a drug den.” Jyuto walked with his hands in his pockets, bag slung over his shoulder. Tsuyuki’s smile never wavered. “Worst case scenario, I could ask your mother about all your dirty little secrets. Kazeko Asano, was it? I’m sure she would be happy to talk about her dear son.”

He kept walking for a few paces further, but realized quickly that Tsuyuki’s footsteps had stopped. He turned around to face Tsuyuki, his brows arched in mild curiosity. “Well? Are you coming?”

Tsuyuki’s face was suddenly still. Frigid. Jyuto could see his eyes widening, millimeter by painful millimeter, opening up so the whole world could see the hunger in his gaze. Jyuto had never seen him look so

hollow before. It was chilling, causing his skin to tingle ever so slightly. Then, without a word, Tsuyuki broke his stillness and strode up to Jyuto so quickly that Jyuto had no time to prepare himself, and Jyuto felt a sudden hand grab the front of his shirt, another on the back of his head, and both of them jerked him towards Tsuyuki until Tsuyuki’s lips were right next to his ear.

“You’re a grade-A certified fucking creep, you know that?” Tsuyuki’s voice was a low purr in his throat, deceptively attractive, belying the clear homicidal intent in his words. His breaths wisped against Jyuto’s earlobe, and Jyuto’s stomach felt tight, violent shivers clawing up his spine. He’d never heard Tsuyuki use such coarse language before. “Don’t you ever, EVER even *think* about going near my mother, *Iruma*,” Jyuto’s name was accompanied by a fist grabbing the roots of his hair and yanking, *hard*, and Jyuto let out a soft gasp, “or I swear to god I will kill you. Then you’d get your wish, right?” Tsuyuki pushed Jyuto, forcing him to back up slowly, step by step by step. “I’d go to jail, forever and ever and *ever*. And you’d be the reason why.” Jyuto’s back hit the station’s wall, and Tsuyuki brought his face close, so close Jyuto could find his own reflection in Tsuyuki’s eyes. “See? I’m serious. I promise I’ll fucking kill you.”

Collecting his wits again, Jyuto managed to pull a smirk onto his lips, even though he was definitely at a disadvantage here. “I don’t think I’ve ever seen you this angry before, Asano. Have I upset you? So sorry.”

Tsuyuki glared at him from under the hood of his eyes, and the hand in Jyuto’s hair maneuvered itself to the top of his head instead, and it tugged again. Jyuto let out another gasp, his chin tilted to the ceiling by Tsuyuki’s grip, and he watched Tsuyuki’s eyes twitch into a sneer. “Save it. You’re really going to pretend to be a big, strong police officer right now? Even when you seem to be getting a little…” the fist holding Jyuto’s shirt pushed against his chest, keeping him pinned to the wall, “...hot and bothered under this uniform? I can *feel* you, Iruma. What, do you *like* it when I’m angry like this or something? Sick fucking freak.”

“I could say the same to you,” Jyuto retorted simply, staring down the bridge of his nose at Tsuyuki.

Tsuyuki’s eyes narrowed, and he finally let go of Jyuto, backing up two steps. “Book a hotel.”

“*Pardon?*”

“Did you not fucking hear me?” Tsuyuki hissed over his shoulder. He was already turning to leave. “I said, *book a hotel*. Understand?” He then cocked his head sharply to the side, a movement so controlled and rigid he hardly looked human. He still wasn’t smiling—in fact, he hadn’t smiled a single time since Jyuto had said that thing about his mom. “Unless you really *don’t* want to get fucked face-first into a mattress tonight.”

Jyuto stared at him. He blinked slowly, and a grin gradually worked its way onto his features. “Why don’t you call instead? I have to drive.”

“You can’t hold a phone in one hand and the steering wheel with the other?” Tsuyuki turned his nose up at Jyuto, piercing him with a gaze both disdainful and disgusted. “You’re actually useless.”

“Ooh, ouch, how harsh. You wound me, Asano.” Jyuto laughed, walking at Tsuyuki’s side again. He heard a deep growl make its way from Tsuyuki’s mouth and he shivered again. He hoped Tsuyuki didn’t notice.

“Book the fucking hotel, Iruma. I’m not asking.”

“Fine, fine. Whatever you say.”

Jyuto didn’t see Tsuyuki smile for the rest of the night. That night, he saw a different side of Tsuyuki entirely, one he never thought even existed to begin with. He became intimately familiar with the feeling of Tsuyuki’s fingernails in his thighs, sharp teeth in the meat of his neck, the taste of Tsuyuki’s tongue, warm and wet against his own. He realized that despite Tsuyuki’s everyday docility, there was something burning and furious inside him that managed to force Jyuto into submission, even though he tried so hard to resist. He suddenly knew that Tsuyuki was *violent*; he knew exactly what to do and how to do it to get Jyuto to break. And he reaffirmed to himself that he *hated* this man. That night, Jyuto saw Tsuyuki Asano for the first time, and he knew the man would become his new vice, and lead him to his doom.

He could hardly contain his excitement.

(CW: implications of past sexual abuse)

Jyuto felt his shin bump against the doorframe of Tsuyuki’s bedroom as the two of them stumbled inside, eyes closed, wrapped up in each other’s arms and locked in a kiss. Jyuto knew the likelihood of Chuohku having installed cameras in Tsuyuki’s home wasn’t zero, and he knew that if Chuohku got any sort of footage of them acting like a couple, their lives would be made hell. The danger was strong, but Jyuto’s yearning was stronger, and so was Tsuyuki’s. Jyuto knew that Tsuyuki also knew what would happen if their little tryst was caught, but it seemed like he was throwing caution to the wind, pressing himself against Jyuto’s body and kissing him so hard that he gasped every time he needed a breath. Jyuto was glad for it, because he *needed* Tsuyuki; not just to satisfy his own cravings, but also because he needed him to know that despite everything, despite all the work Chuohku was going through to destroy the life and legacy of Tsuyuki Asano, someone still wanted him. Even if nobody else on earth did, Jyuto still wanted him.

Tsuyuki kicked the door shut behind them and pushed Jyuto’s jacket off his shoulders, and Jyuto shrugged off the piece, not caring to see where it landed. Then his hands went back to cradling Tsuyuki’s face, roaming under his skull and threading through unwashed purple hair. He cracked his eyes open a sliver and murmured into Tsuyuki’s mouth, “I miss you.”

Tsuyuki didn’t respond, but Jyuto didn’t need him to; the way his brows furrowed and the sudden taste of sorrow on his tongue said enough. Jyuto guided him towards the bed until the back of his knees hit the mattress, and Tsuyuki broke their kiss momentarily to situate himself on his bed properly. Jyuto watched with a distinct sense of heaviness in his gut, because he knew that normally, Tsuyuki would have fallen back on the mattress with a giggle and shimmied his legs up onto it. Normally, Tsuyuki would have made a joke about how he was ‘falling for you, Jyuto,’ or something equally dumb. The fact that he didn’t do that, didn’t do anything Jyuto would have expected him to do, communicated to Jyuto exactly how much his situation had broken him.

He didn’t have a lot of time to think about it, though, because Tsuyuki whispered a quiet, “Come here,” and his hands were grabbing Jyuto’s shirt and pulling him in for another kiss, dragging him onto the bed, on top of Tsuyuki. He swelled against Tsuyuki’s body with movements slow, careful, sensual, and he only barely managed to recognize the brief flicker of annoyance in his mind when he felt the fabric of Tsuyuki’s shirt under his fingers.

“We’re getting this off,” he muttered, and Tsuyuki nodded, sitting up so Jyuto could help him get rid of the thing. When Tsuyuki’s chest was bare, Jyuto couldn’t stop himself from smiling. *Beautiful*, he wanted to say, but instead it came out as, “That’s better.” Then he kissed him again, slowly lowering him back onto the bed, his hands warming the skin of Tsuyuki’s torso in gentle circular motions, drawing out a sigh and a whisper of his name from the man beneath him. It made Jyuto’s heart pop like a balloon, so suddenly overwhelmed by infatuation and relief—relief because hearing his name from Tsuyuki’s lips was like a reassurance, something to tell him that Tsuyuki was still alive.

“That’s right,” Jyuto replied, leaving a trail of soft kisses from the corner of his lips up to his ear. “I’m right here. Everything’s okay now.”

Tsuyuki let out a tremulous breath as Jyuto kissed down the valley of his throat, lightly nibbling at the skin. “Do you have to leave?”

“What do you mean?” He kept his lips attached to Tsuyuki’s neck, giving each side equal amounts of attention. Tsuyuki tilted his head from side to side to give him more room.

“I mean— Yokohama. Do you have to go back to Yokohama?” Tsuyuki’s hands were gentle, buried in Jyuto’s hair, and his voice was so quiet it was barely audible. “Can’t you stay here? With me?”

Jyuto glanced up at Tsuyuki, at his flitting gaze and his lip caught between his teeth. He pushed a quiet, sympathetic exhale through his nose, feeling his eyes soften at the edges until he was looking at Tsuyuki through dark lashes. “I’m sorry, darling. You know I would stay if I could.”

Tsuyuki let his head fall to the side, staring off towards the wall of his bedroom. “...Yeah, I know. Sorry, I just... I wish you could be with me all the time. Would make everything a lot easier.”

“I know.” His thumbs circled Tsuyuki’s hip bones as he moved his lips further down Tsuyuki’s body, planting little dots of warmth all over his chest, causing Tsuyuki to arch his back into Jyuto’s touch. He didn’t say anything more, because trying to do so might make Tsuyuki cry, might make *him* cry. Instead, he let his body speak for itself, melting deep into the heat emanating off of Tsuyuki’s skin, groaning when Tsuyuki wrapped a fist around his hair. *I love you, Tsuyuki. I love you. I love you. My god, Tsuyuki, I love you so fucking much.*

And he kept moving in silence, the only sound in the room being the occasional rustling of sheets as Tsuyuki squirmed to press into Jyuto’s body, the occasional gasp or whimper or sigh of Jyuto’s name, until Jyuto reached the waistband of Tsuyuki’s pants. His nose caught the scent of metal as it brushed the button keeping the garment in place, and he flicked his gaze up to Tsuyuki’s face. Tsuyuki had moved one of his hands away from Jyuto’s hair so he could chew absentmindedly on the nail of his thumb. He still watched Jyuto with rapt attention, his eyes flinching ever so slightly when Jyuto pressed more soft, slow kisses down the zipper and seam of his pants, twitching under the warmth of his lips.

“Jyuto,” Tsuyuki breathed. It sounded like a plea, and the way his hand trembled in Jyuto’s hair told him what exactly Tsuyuki was pleading for. But rather than acquiescing to Tsuyuki’s wants, Jyuto instead turned his head to trail even more tender kisses along his thighs, fanning his thumb over the area where he knew a huge, X-shaped scar lay under the fabric. A scar that Tsuyuki had received when he was still young, one that stretched itself out as he grew taller, as muscle started to hug his bones. It made Jyuto a little sick to think about, but he ignored the sour feeling in his stomach in favor of focusing on Tsuyuki’s lithe fingers combing back his hair, stroking behind his ear.

“I miss you,” he said again, his voice still quiet but laden with longing. “You don’t understand how much I miss you, Tsuyuki.”

Tsuyuki fidgeted with his legs as Jyuto continued to shower affection on his thighs, and Jyuto felt Tsuyuki’s hand leave his hair, though he wasn’t bothered enough by the loss of warmth to stop or even question why Tsuyuki had suddenly let go. It was only when Tsuyuki said his name again, more desperate than anything else, that Jyuto interrupted his task and propped himself up to look Tsuyuki’s way. The palms of his hands covered his eyes, and Jyuto felt his chest twist, because he’d never seen Tsuyuki look so... *desolate*. Not when, by all accounts, he should have been feeling anything *but* desolate, considering what they were in the middle of.

“Jyuto—” Tsuyuki repeated in a stammer, pressing the bases of his palms into his eyes. “Jyuto, I— I—”

“Do you want me to stop?” Jyuto asked.

“No,” was the immediate answer. “No, I don’t— Don’t stop. Please don’t stop.”

Jyuto frowned, raising back up until he was hovering over Tsuyuki’s face. Tsuyuki looked and sounded like he was about to cry, anxiously chewing his bottom lip between shallow breaths. As carefully as he could, Jyuto pulled Tsuyuki’s hands away from his face, and he was met with pooling tears and pleading eyes. He cupped Tsuyuki’s jaw, his thumb massaging Tsuyuki’s cheek in slow, circular motions. “What’s going on? Have I done something to upset you?”

“No, no, you haven’t... It’s really the opposite. It’s stupid, I just— I’ve never—” Tsuyuki moved to cover his eyes again with his forearms. Jyuto let him. “No one has ever treated me this gently and... *lovingly* during sex before.”

Jyuto’s brows furrowed. “Never?”

Tsuyuki nodded, taking in a shaky breath. “And I don’t know what to do with myself if— if I’m not being treated like I’m dirty.”

“Let me ask you again, Tsuyuki. Do you want me to stop?”

“No!” he cried. “No, I— I— I want you, Jyuto, I just—” He rubbed his eyes again, keeping them hidden from Jyuto’s view. “...Sorry.”

Jyuto brushed some blue hairs from Tsuyuki’s face. “Take your time.”

Another quivering inhale. “I just... can’t comprehend why anyone—you, of all people—would see me as— as someone worth having sex with, or— or ‘making love’ with. I just feel like— I dunno, like you should just be using me like a fucking— blow-up doll or something—”

“Okay, stop, stop, stop.” Jyuto cut off Tsuyuki’s ramblings prematurely, assertive and unwavering. Tsuyuki let out a whimper when he did. “Don’t say that about yourself. You’re a human, Tsuyuki, not a sex toy, and I want to worship you. Is that so wrong?”

“But why— why me?” Tsuyuki asked, almost shouting the question. There was more than a twinge of desperation in his voice. “And with my reputation like this— I’ve been reduced to nothing. I’m fucking useless! How am I desirable anymore? I have nothing to offer you, Jyuto, and you deserve someone who can offer you something, *anything*—”

“Tsuyuki!”

Tsuyuki jolted, finally lowering his arms to look at Jyuto with watery eyes. Jyuto’s heart twisted itself in half. “I want you because I want you,” he said. He cursed the way his voice shook when he spoke. His hand ghosted down Tsuyuki’s body, shoulder to chest to navel to hips to thigh, and then back up again, slow and gentle. “That’s all there is to it. I don’t care about your reputation, I don’t care about what you have to offer me. I want *you*. I want the Tsuyuki who laughs when I slip off the bed while we’re having sex. I want the Tsuyuki who presses ice packs to my knees and massages my shoulders after a rough night, even when I don’t ask him to. Tsuyuki, you’re more than just a *thing* for people to fuck.” And then he kissed Tsuyuki’s forehead, then his temple, down his cheek to his jaw and neck. Tsuyuki let out a quiet sigh, his body shuddering. “You’re a person. You hear me? A *person*. And I like the person that you are, and I want to *worship* you. I want to make you feel so good that you’ll feel like this whole damn place is sacred. So please... Just let me do that, okay?”

Tsuyuki’s hands floated up to Jyuto’s face to pull it away from his neck with a ginger touch. He was staring at him with some mix of shock, incredulity, grief, and overwhelming love. Jyuto turned to softly kiss Tsuyuki’s right palm, and Tsuyuki whispered, “Okay. Okay, I’ll— I’ll let you do that. I’m just... not really sure what to do myself. Tell me... Tell me what to do, Jyuto.”

“You don’t have to do anything, my love.” Jyuto had to ignore the way fresh tears sprang to Tsuyuki’s lash line at the word *love*. “I’ll take care of you. Your only job is to tell me if you ever want me to stop, or if I’m doing something wrong. That’s all you have to do, understand?”

Tsuyuki nodded.

“Tell me what you want. Be clear with me.”

“I...” Tsuyuki’s eyes slid shut. “I want you. I want you to make me feel good. And I... I want you to be really gentle with me.”

Jyuto couldn’t help but smile. “You got it, darling. Don’t you worry about a thing.”

He received another little nod, and Tsuyuki pulled him down to kiss him, deep and tender on the lips. Tsuyuki threaded his fingers through Jyuto’s hair, bringing a knee up between Jyuto’s legs until he drew out the quietest of groans. As Jyuto once again kissed down Tsuyuki’s neck, he could feel Tsuyuki gradually relax beneath his hands, until the way they melted into each other’s bodies was as natural as it had ever been. And when Tsuyuki raked his fingernails down Jyuto’s back, and when he exhaled something trembling against Jyuto’s ear, and when they whispered each other’s names into the darkness of Tsuyuki’s bedroom, Jyuto couldn’t help but feel like they had just engaged in prayer. 🙏

A Mad Night

By Mia Sanghvi

After a long day, you head back home to find yourself greeted by your lover

_____ who is wearing nothing but a _____. You feel yourself
name article of clothing

blush in _____. Your lover pulls you inside, beckoning you towards
emotion

the bedroom. _____ litter the floor and the bed, _____
plural noun light sources

illuminate the room in a seductive glow, and the smell of _____
scent

infiltrates your nose. Feeling aroused, you feverishly press your lips against your

lover’s _____ ones as they try to take off your _____. Once
adjective article of clothing

they’ve got you undressed, they _____ push you onto the bed. Your
adverb

lover _____ on top of you and sucks on your _____, eliciting a
verb ending in s body part

_____ from you. Overwhelmed with pleasure, you position yourself under
sound

your sweetheart, and plunge your _____ into their _____.
body part body part

Sounds of _____ and _____ against _____ permeate the
noise ending in -ing noun noun

room. Finally, when you can take it no longer, waves of _____ wash
emotion

over you as you _____. Your lover follows shortly afterwards, holding
verb

_____ onto you. You spend the rest of the night _____ each
adverb ending in -ly verb ending in -ing

other.

Don’t forget to pee! 🙏

The Voynich Manuscript

compiled by J. E. Cramer; foreword by J. E. Cramer

Foreword: This is not a place of honor. This place is best left shunned and uninhabited. This is a work of fiction, but for the sake of immersion, I ask you—if I may—to suspend your disbelief—if you will—for a moment. This is an act of love.

To Mr. J. E. Cramer
4625 Cleburne Road
Dublin, VA
24804

February 06, 1972

From the desk of Robin Ward, Editor in Chief at the Oh, Man!

Dear Mr. Cramer:

[illegible]

We look forward with undiminished enthusiasm to the pleasure of considering more of your work in the near future.

Cheers,

Robin Ward, Editor in Chief at the Oh, Man!

Oh, Man! Editorial Offices
P. O. Box 420
Gay Sexton, MA
01069

To whom it may concern:

Twenty-six times I sent you “The Voynich Womanuscript” in the innocent hope of becoming world-renowned for my short erotic fiction based off of everyone’s favorite ambiguously Italianate illuminated codex, in the cipher in which the Voynich Manuscript was originally written. Twenty-six times I lovingly typed out every word of the world’s foremost work of drivers’ edurotica by hand on a typewriter made from the bones of Jacob v Tepence, Czech pharmacist whose half-legible signature can be seen in one corner of page 3 of the Voynich Manuscript. Twenty-six times I walked uphill both ways to the post office, my master copy of “The Voynich Womanuscript” under one arm and my ailing carrier pigeon Babs on my shoulder. And twenty-six times you told me to “just change a few words here and there.”

So I've taken your advice—for the twenty-seventh time, this is “The Voynich Womanuscript” the world's first work of lesbian erotica featuring the much-beloved characters ██████████, ██████████, ██████, and ██████████, shoved word by word through the worst online thesaurus money shouldn't have bought with all the dignity of a cheeseburger through a tennis racket. How's that for a few words here and there?

Thank you, sincerely, for all the valuable advice you've given me.

Get fucked,

The Reverend J. E. Cramer

~*~*~*~*~*~*~*

The sun penetrated the windshield of ██████████'s Toyota Yaris, ropy beams of light streaming over the planes of her face. ██████████

ostensory

hundreds of miles below the earth's surface

her blunt, throbbing instrument

that which was even now so “Your Honor,”

sensual little firehose

Her other extremely damp

a reckoning in not an ending, not by any means, but

fuck

stickier than I thought,”

in the name of that which is to come, by a name yet known to man, that

“country matters”

[REDACTED]

“Same time next week?” [REDACTED] expressed passionately. And so they did.

J. E. Cramer
4625 Cleburne Rd.
Dublin, VA
24804

Mr. Cramer:
Three days ago, around nine-thirty in the morning, I delivered a stack of entries to the bureau of Robin Ward, now-former editor of the Oh, Man!. Three days ago, around ten in the morning, I heard muffled cursing, breaking glass, and what I can only imagine frenzied efforts toward picking up a desk so as to hurl it out the nearest window would sound like from inside their office. Ward then stormed howling through the building, all the way down three flights of stairs, and presumably out the door. They have not been heard from since.

Your manuscript was sitting open on their desk. At first, I was hesitant to think that any one submission could have caused Ward’s outburst, but upon skimming through it, I was very nearly compelled to follow them out. I wish that someone in your life had had the good sense to tell you that rather than correcting “road head” to “street smarts,” you just shouldn’t say “road head” at all. As a matter of fact, you shouldn’t have written any of this. As acting editor-in-chief of the Oh, Man!, I am publishing “The Voynich Womanuscript” now only because I know that no number of rejections or cease-and-desist orders will stop you from continuing to submit it.

I look forward to never hearing from you again, though I thank you for what you have inadvertently done to advance my career.

Like a Dream

by Malfoy Kimmel

The figure standing in the threshold, though I cannot see her face, looks like she’s been expecting me. She has her head tilted, fingers curled curiously around something that looks like a joint, but I don’t smell weed. The fold in the velvet fabric of her bunny ears lends to the air of inquisitiveness.

“Your name, angel?”

She says the word not like an endearment, but like a title. Or a label, more accurately. I step forward into the circle of warmth and bluish light lent by the foyer behind her. Autumn seems to recoil just as it reaches the burnish of her skin, which seems unperturbed by the temperature, even though I huddle in my sweater, and she stands in a leotard of white chiffon.

The bunny girl’s eyes are shaded with a pearled mask. I cannot tell their color. She listens to my name, and after a moment of deliberation, says, “Come in.”

She drags on her strange-looking cigarette. She blows, away from my face, and the resulting puff of smoke smells of lavender.

In the first chamber, the girl instructs me to remove my shoes, and tells me that in this realm, Caress, the list of rules is short.

“Ask before you touch. Everything is fair game.”

The bunny girl gives me my own lavender cigarette to calm my nerves as we enter a dimly lit corridor, red-tinted fluorescents burning above. I count the steps we take: one, two, three... all the way up to twelve. We reach a door, its metal body cut through with a rectangular hole near the top. Through it, I can hear the noises of the people inside-- their breath, their evidence of flesh.

Caress. I blow lavender-scented smoke and the bunny girl opens the door.

I’ve heard the rumors about this place, about what I might see and hear. I’ve heard also how successful it was, not only as a form of therapy for people like me, who were afraid or unfamiliar with certain kinds of touch, but as a playground.

I stick close to the bunny girl. She walks past the scenes unfolding on either side as if they’re commonplace. Masses of people in black leather, in blazers, in lacy negligee, in cloaks, in nothing at all, are entwined with each other. On couches, on stools, on marble kitchen islands without the kitchens. There is only one purpose for the room that stretches on endlessly before us: touch.

There is a couple that curls against each other so closely I can scarcely tell where one body ends and the other begins. They are murmuring to each other. Three people in fishnets take turns sucking on a plastic dildo, their chins and chests wet with saliva, hands grasping their thighs. Someone wearing cascading ribbons in their hair wraps their hands around their partner’s neck as they ride them.

My stomach turns, not with disgust, but with discomfort, with the realization that in this scenario, I am a voyeur. I want to cover my eyes.

“Don’t.” The bunny girl’s voice is close, but not too close. She keeps her hands behind her back. “This is Caress’s full immersion. No shame, no embarrassment. Love and touch in all its forms. Witness.”

And I do. We walk together, ghosts among a lively graveyard, the bunny girl and I, her eyes hidden and non-judgmental. We watch people have sex and make love and fuck, watch them hold hands and cuddle and kiss. Acts so simple they are complex, done with such ease that I am envious.

“What is it that you want?” The girl asks. The question comes just as we come across a couple on the floor, one person on their knees as they lick between their partner’s legs. The receiver arches and sighs, the muscles in their neck flexing as they tilt back in pleasure. Their eyes, drooping with ecstasy, briefly meet mine, and the abject satisfaction is so honest and real I don’t even blush. Their thighs are patterned with fine hairs and stretch marks, worshipped with hands strong and sure.

I take a shaky breath. “I know this might sound stupid, but... I just want to be able to kiss. Without worrying about what comes next. Without worrying I’m bad at it, or that I’ll want too much, or...” I shrug. The bunny girl nods. She offers no comment.

The haze of the touching chamber ends and I am brought to a cozy, dimly lit room furnished in an ephemeral sort of way. There are many lamps hooded with stained glass, veiled with scarlet, indigo, forest green scarfs. There is a loveseat, or two, and some armchairs. The fabric of the chairs are floral in a grandmotherly sort of way, or perhaps iridescent. The wallpaper shifts and changes color. The only thing consistent about the room is the feeling of comfort, of safety. There are no edges to hurt me here.

There are candles and a woman lighting them. Her hair is a bronze-brown sheaf, tumbling dangerously close to flame. Her eyes are narrow and kind.

She says my name with relief. “Glad to finally meet you,” says the woman, her voice burning as warmly as the candles. She flicks her wrist -- a beautiful, birdlike wrist -- to make a match go out. “Welcome to Caress. I know it’s terribly cliché, but if you want to address me, I go by Lover for the duration of your stay.”

She gestures and I sit. “Have you been... waiting for me?” Lover smiles, and in the curve of her lips there is an answer for all the questions I’ve ever had -- all except for the one I just asked. There is something godlike about that smile, and I clutch the armrests beneath my palms, wondering for the very first time if this could all be a dream. But the chair I’m sitting on does not dissolve into smoke.

“Tell me what you want,” she says gently. I open my mouth and very nearly say, *you*. It’s surprising, the way I already want her, the fall of her hair, the flick of her wrist, the way her velvet suit hugs the curves of her body. But the wanting isn’t sexual, and not strictly platonic, either. It’s just... there.

“I want to feel wanted.” The truth is tugged out of me like a fish on a line. It struggles. “I want to not be so afraid of affection. I want to love myself, and more than that... *know* myself.” My hands cling to my shoulders in a gesture of self-protection. “I want to have sex, or at least know if I want to or not. I want to not be so tired.”

“Will you let me hold you?” The question dangles before me like a jewel. I seize it. “Yes. Please.”

So she does, takes me against her chest and strokes my hair. It’s the first time in years I’ve let anyone touch me like that, let alone a stranger. I hug her waist. For reasons I cannot express, I begin to cry-- a bottle beginning to be emptied.

The Second Night

When the bunny girl leads me through the touch chamber a second time, she offers me no lavender cigarette. My senses are more alive, a rubber band pulled tight, each moan and cry and beg pulling on it.

The bunny girl makes me stop twice. The first time, I watch the long curls of a dominatrix sway as she smacks the back of a young man’s thighs over and over with a riding crop, her lips turned up and his cock standing fully erect. The second time, I watch as two elderly women in floor-length gowns hold each other’s hands, thumbs rubbing over the mountains and valleys of wrinkled knuckles.

I feel like I am being tested, but the bunny girl asks me no questions as we walk through the room, scenes of tenderness and lust passing by in a whirl. I’m starting to feel less overstimulated and more turned-on by it all, but I don’t dare to act on it. There is nothing stopping me from joining any of the groups making various forms of love, but how could I? When they could push me away, hiss in disapproval, tell me to put on my clothes and get out?

Lover’s room is unchanged, but Lover is not. He is a man now -- a changing man, but a man nonetheless. His skin, no matter how much I try to focus on it in the dim light, is of an indeterminate color. His hair settles just at the nape of his neck, his eyes shifting between jewel tones and an earthy brown. His body changes slightly as he paces the carpet, lilting in a raven-like way. He is much less sure of himself tonight, a performer on stilts for the first time.

“I feel like I overstepped yesterday,” Lover says. He nods to the carved table, where a teapot and two steaming teacups sit. I take my place in one of the armchairs. “I don’t want to make you do anything you’re not comfortable with.”

“I didn’t feel uncomfortable,” I say honestly. I sip the tea-- it tastes like flowers, and a little like perfume. I set it down. “Did you? Feel uncomfortable?”

“No.” Lover nibbles at his lip. He is decidedly more nervous and more human today. He wrings his hands. It’s sort of adorable. “You remind me of myself, you know. I came into Caress in your position, once. I was so afraid of... of being rejected. Of not being able to handle it all.”

“How long ago was that?” I ask. Lover’s mouth twists in an apologetic way. He sits beside me, his knee very close to brushing mine, though of course, it doesn’t.

Ask before you touch. “I would rather not answer that,” Lover says. “I don’t want to scare you. Is that okay?” “Yes.”

“Isn’t it funny,” Lover says, “How much you can know about a person, in just two nights? I look at the way you hold yourself, the way you slouch, the way your eyes move...” He tilts his head. “There is a whole story written in and within the body. How much a person speaks or moans during sex means something. How much sex they have means something.”

“A story written on the body,” I echo. I suddenly very much want to see his. Lover is dressed quite extravagantly today, in a fluttery dark blue dress whose layers show off his calves, and in silver rings that accentuate the length of his fingers.

“You want to see me?” Lover asks in a low voice, and I blush, forgetting what kind of being I must be dealing with. “All you have to do is ask.”

I am trembling a little, from nervousness. I gather up the question with my hands. “Could you... Do you want...” I swallow. “Will you please take off that dress?”

“‘Please,’ what a pretty word,” Lover murmurs. He stands and slips the straps off with a delicate sweep of his fingers. The fabric tumbles to the ground. He wears now only a black stain slip that hitches up on his thighs as he walks towards me, kneels to the ground. Lover’s lashes are long, and he looks through them at me.

I look back at him, at the freckles scattered in patches, the birthmarks like stars, a jagged scar like lightning, acne blossoming along his jaw. There are hickies below his collarbone, and I burn with the knowledge that I was not the one to leave them.

“May I hold you?” I ask, and Lover nods, offers his head against my knee. I stroke his hair and he hums with pleasure.

The Third Night

People are staring at me as I walk with the bunny girl beneath the red lights of the touching room. Or maybe they’re staring at her; even with most of her face covered, she is lovely in her white leotard, her graceful arms swinging like wind-shaken branches by her side.

Someone fingering their partner meets my gaze as they kiss their partner’s neck. They grin, animal-like, as if to encourage me.

When the bunny girl reaches the door to Lover’s room, she doesn’t open it right away. She must be waiting for me to do it, to turn the handle and accept the final night.

“I just want to say,” I begin awkwardly, “Thank you for guiding me.”

The girl inclines her head. “Of course. I enjoy guiding; it’s no trouble.”

“Can I hug you?”

She shakes her head. “No, thank you. But I am glad you asked.” She presses a dainty hand to her chest.

“Even though you don’t touch me, when you ask that I... I can feel it in here. Do you understand?”

I think I do.

Lover has assumed their true form. They recline as if upon a throne, all at once naked and clothed, fat and skinny, regal and bumbling, long- and short-haired. Their skin is scrawled with their story, unending and beautiful. A fabric like silk runs like water over my body, but I almost immediately take off the robe and kneel at Lover’s chair. They reach forward, their hand curving in the air as if to caress my face.

“What do you wish for?”

A thousand possibilities tumble through my head. To bury my face between their legs and lap up their pleasure. To suck and nip at their neck until the skin there is ruined. To run my nails up and down their back as they fuck me. The light in the room brightens and sparkles, the colors and textures of the furniture spinning around me. I am naked but invulnerable.

“May I kiss you?”

The light dims. Lover leans over their knees, a playful expression on their face, and suddenly we are on a park bench in the middle of a field, sunlight settling somewhere between sunrise and sunset, twilight and dawn. The wind is sliding through the grass. Lover is in jeans and a sweater, and their face is familiar. They laugh and the sound carries.

“Yes. Of course you may.”

The wind is whipping their hair into their face. I brush it aside, my hand resting at their jaw. They turn their head up. Their lips are soft and yielding, their tongue curious. They steady themselves with a hand splayed against my thigh.

Lover smells of the earth and of sunburned grass and of sweat. I kiss them, and it feels like a dream. 🐰



Okay so maybe this isn’t erotica by definition, but the second I saw the call out for the erotica edition, aphrodisiacs came to mind. An aphrodisiac is a food that somehow some scientist has linked to increasing your libido. I think the most common thought of aphrodisiac is an oyster, which, one, I find hard to believe, but two is not the most accessible college meal. So my erotica for today is taking a handful of aphrodisiacs together to make a tasty, yet affordable dish for you all to try as a side or a main dish!

Spicy & Sweet Potatoes

Ingredients:

- 2 large sweet potatoes - cubed
- ¼ c honey
- ¼ c olive oil
- 1 teaspoon of ground ginger or 3 tablespoons of fresh ginger
- 1 teaspoon of ground garlic or 3 tablespoons of fresh garlic
- Crushed chili flakes to taste
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon pepper

*Ingredients in italics are aphrodisiacs

Directions:

- Preheat oven to 400 degrees
- Add all ingredients to a bowl and mixed until sweet potatoes are evenly coated
- Cover a baking sheet with aluminum foil and spread potatoes evenly
- Bake until sweet potatoes are tender - about 30 or 40 minutes

Tips:

If you want to incorporate another aphrodisiac into this dish, serve these potatoes on a bed of arugula!

You don’t need to peel your potatoes. I have never once peeled mine because it takes too long. I like when the skin gets crispy, and I feel like my mom told me there’s more nutrients in the skin but maybe she just also hates peeling them!

I have never ever bought fresh ginger because that feels really intimidating to me and I feel like I would end up throwing a lot away. Instead, I buy the tubes of it, which you can find in the produce section of grocery stores. I love this shortcut. The ginger stays good for a really long time, and you just squeeze some out of a tube as needed! They do also sell garlic in these tubes, but I think that the jars of minced garlic are slightly more affordable.

I find it annoying when recipes say to taste because it is hard to know what to taste means. Obviously chili flakes are going to add spice to this dish, but also sweet potatoes are sweet and we are adding honey, so you can go a little heavier handed here. I would start at a teaspoon, see how it looks for you and then add more in if you’d like. 🐰

A young Answer to an old Riddle

by Nicholas Utakis-Smith



on the merits of sex

by willow watson

i don't know if it's immaturity or desensitization or even just that i don't know what i'm talking about, but i really don't see the appeal when it comes to sex. that's not to say that i can't imagine why it might be desirable, but instead that i see it as i do roller coaster rides - stimulating, intense, but certainly not something i'd ever go out of my way for. truly, it seems to me that sensuality & eroticism are leagues more exciting than the act itself (as is the fact that such a disconnect exists at all). i mean, take toshiro mifune (Figure 1). i'm not attracted to guys, i have exactly zero interest even in the hypothetical possibility of having relations with him, & yet he is, hands down, the sexiest person i can think of. this still, incidentally, is from 1948's *Drunken Angel*, throughout which his character is slowly dying of tuberculosis, & yet there is a sort of wiry power to him, a tension & feeling which grabs my attention far more than i think anyone would nude. his sexuality is meaningful, visceral, & admirable, & even if it doesn't compel me to action, i can recognize what it symbolizes in a larger & deeper sense.

as i see it, that idea helps to explain why indirect portrayals of sex in general resonate more deeply with me than straightforward ones. the narrative weight that's so often given to sexuality & attraction, the gravity assigned to them as goals & ideals, seems much more compelling to me than the fleeting sensations of pleasure or arousal, & so depictions that lean into the aesthetics or innovative ways of communicating eroticism are much easier for me to appreciate. of course i'm thinking of the classic examples of cinematic sex - the fall of the wall of jericho in *It Happened One Night*, or the train entering the tunnel in *North by Northwest* - which leave everything up to the viewer's imagination, & can therefore surpass the shortcomings of film. but in terms of what is actually *felt*, the first things that come to mind are horror movies. fear & tension go a remarkably long way in amping up the feeling behind sexuality for me, especially when they are tinged with questions of intimacy (think vampires, possession, giallo, etc.). the best example i can give is body horror, which allows not only for the anxiety & immediacy of transformation, but also opens up the possibilities of sex itself (the initial idea for this article was on the erotic potential of gills - take that as you will).

but all of that is limited almost entirely to the implication of debased sensuality, & that might be one of the reasons that horror has never been among my favorite genres. maybe it's because i'm looking for something else out of sex that i just don't get it (ha!), but it seems to me that the intimacy of a shared understanding or a mutual devotion in & of itself is so much more worthwhile. to have something special & unique with other people is moving, significant, & lasting in a way that i can't imagine sexual pleasure would be, which is why i've only ever been drawn to romance & not to sex. the ideas of missed connections, or noble intentions, or love so strong it can have a power of its own may all be fantasies, but the hope i have for them is worth holding onto, in that it's ongoing, encouraging, & potentially fulfilling. i certainly don't look to romantic comedies for my expectations in life, but both on film & outside of it i can recognize meaning to love even (sometimes especially) without sex. more precisely, i think i'd say that while i can appreciate sexuality on its own merits, romance means something completely different to me right now, & it remains infinitely more desirable.



Figure 1: Toshiro Mifune, *Drunken Angel* (1948)

Crunchtime

by Luke Brisbois

1914 Hamburg, Germany.

The Captain had read the news. Sarajevo assassination. An archduke killed alongside his wife. Death was one thing to The Captain, but politics was something he wasn’t so sweet on. The nature of his position though did put him hand in hand with all different types all over the world. In fact it placed him here on the third floor in the summer heat.

The three people around the table were there to discuss plans going forward. Among the rising tensions many powerful people reached out wanting a certain level of professionalism only deemed appropriate from this group here. Babur was a tiger of a man. His sculpted arms burst out of a white sleeveless shirt. Holding a recently developed picture from a manila envelope he looked to his left where Smaxey was holding a locket in her hand. Her lips protruded a frown as she licked two fingers and tried to wrestle down a rather vindictive cowlick.

“So, it’s a protection job you want?” Babur raised his brow and placed the black and white square on the table.

“More or less,” Smaxey blinked her lips and met eyes with The Captain, “we just need someone to see that he gets on a ship outbound from Germany safely.”

“He? Just who is this man to garner such attention from us?”

The Captain pressed his index finger and thumb together on a corner of the photograph and held it to the sunlight. The first noticeable feature of the figure before him was his fingers. They were slightly curled and rather large white appendages. The second was the unabashed smile that adorned the space on his face.

“Not quite a politician but some would say a powerful helper. Most call him ‘Lefty’. It is important that this does not go wrong.”

It was late the next night that The Captain came upon the alleyway. Babur delegated the task to him as his son Anthony would be visiting and it was too risky having a high profile person like Lefty putting him in the crosshairs. It suited The Captain better anyways due to his rather poignant relationship with the sea. He’d be happy to look upon it once more.

Shuffling down now toward him was a familiar figure. He wore sunglasses but there was no mistaking that this was the person with which The Captain was arranged to meet. The first thing to notice was just how rosy this character’s nose was. It seemed evident from the photos but now that he was up close it was unmistakable. His lips protruded a smile as bright and as red. The next thing to note about Lefty was the fact that his body was in fact the shape of a huge gloved hand with a face occupying the palm.

“So you must be Mr. Crunch.” the appendagelike person spoke as he revealed blank black eyes from under his eyewear.

“Captain. You may call me Captain Crunch.”

As the golden eagle was high in the sky Captain Crunch was sleepily drudging his way down a quiet cobblestone street. The only friend to accompany the noise of his own feet was the shuffle of the gloved friend in front of him. The sweat on his brow smothered up against his azure hat. They had started on foot towards midnight and had not stopped. The Captain posited that it must be past midday at this juncture of time. He was dying for a drink, anything to combat the powdery ball drying up his throat. Lefty was starting to drag. Well, more than the usual. Since the two were making good pace, the latest estimates leaving them about half a day to port,

Crunch deems it safe to enter a nearby watering hole. One that seemed discrete and like the kind of place people could and would keep their mouths shut.

Down a staircase and through a yellow door they entered Pop’s Place. It was small. Packed with bodies of people off during their lunch breaks from work or perhaps people with nothing better to do than get drunk in the middle of the day. No one sitting at their tables rushed to make eye contact with the entering strangers, but it didn’t stop them from giving a palpable amount of side eye. Past the tables at the far end of the single room was a medium height counter with a round man polishing a pint glass.

The Captain swaggered past the tables and staring eyes and tried to turn on the charm years of experience could only give him. Through a rather one sided conversation returned only in grunts from the other party The Captain was able to order himself a white russian which is impressive in itself as it hadn’t been invented yet. He was also able to obtain a glass of the best merlot for his prestigious friend. Most crucially he had been able to subtly mention to the fellow mustachioed gentleman across the counter that if asked he and his handy friend had never been here.

The two sat awkwardly with their drinks upon two stools. Stools which were equally distant apart and made the pair sit bowlegged. Well, bowlegged for one and bow wristed for the other. That was until from the opposite corner of the room a shape approached. It wore a pink and white striped turtleneck. In its hand it was stirring a dark drink. It was chuckling to itself as it was approaching. The Captain eyed this new situation with caution. The hand seemed to be on even more high alert.

“It is you isn’t it? That clever disguise can’t fool my keen eyes.”

Lefty’s eyebrows raised above the line of his sunglasses in shock or possibly fear.

“You called me crazy. In the open forum. You said it was just sugar. That limiting chocolate would help our children. Make them less cuckoo. Hah. You do make me laugh.”

It opened its beak wide now and cackled. Cold and calculating.

“Sonny?” Lefty leaned forward in his seat.

“Well, Hamburger Helper, who is cuckoo now?”

The next moments happened far too fast and seemed to last forever. An orange feathered hand produced something that had been folded into the collar of their turtleneck. There were movements forward and a flash of red. The Captain acted as fast as he could. He grabbed the spoon from the bird’s drink and removed the assailant from his footing. On the ground now Captain Crunch holds the spoon to Sonny’s eye. There was shouting and shuffling of people out of seats. The Captain felt two pairs of hands on his sleeved arms. He was hoisted up over the fallen Sonny. Struggling fruitlessly Crunch glanced back to see Lefty getting much the same treatment from the bartender who eschewed his post behind the counter. Expletives were thrown from both sides. As much as it seemed he pushed back, The Captain could not advance back to the person he was supposed to protect.

In no less than a minute the both of them were exiled from the pub. The single yellow door slammed behind them. The Captain picked himself up and went to check on his client.

The Hamburger Helper awoke upon a shallow rocking chair. According to his reddened nose the room smelled of lavender. Good, his senses were returning to him. He looked around now. The bed to his left looked recently cleaned with white sheets and blue pillows. Across the room looking out of the open window was The Captain. His hat rested on the sill as his face contented. Lost in thought. Lefty thought now that this silence might be louder than the commotion at the bar.

“It seems I never dropped my tendency to faint at the sight of blood. Been that way since I was a kid.” Hamburger Helper looked over to the spot on his body that was pulsing and searing in pain. The space between his thumb and forefinger was expertly bandaged. He wondered now if Captain Crunch had done this.

“How are you feeling?” The Captain asks coldly, focusing on a spot somewhere off in the distance.

“It’s just a paper cut. It is fine.”
“But is it? Is it really fine?”
Captain Crunch finally positioned his head away from the window. He stared now at the hapless Helper. His blue orbs glistened with wetness. Fighting back tears The Captain continued.
“You were hurt. I could do nothing. I fought back. I still wasn’t able to do anything. I was helpless. I could do nothing for you. Do you know how that feels?”
The Hamburger Helper tried now to hoist himself up from the chair despite his weakened state.
“Do you know why I am in Germany? They brought me here to help with the meat shortage. I helped avoid a national crisis. At least that’s what I thought.”
Lefty gulped down his pride along with any pain he may have been feeling.
“With meat prices increasing more households turned to sugary foods. I tried to lessen sugar’s impact on them but by the time my father, Leviticus, sent me here a majority of the damage had been done. They call me the Hamburger Helper but lord knows I don’t feel like that most days.”
Lefty went to join The Captain at his post by the window. Both of them somber for the moment.
“You say you couldn’t do anything for me. That’s precisely how I feel about that bird we saw today. Sonny was but a child when I met him. Even then the sugar madness had overtaken him. He refused milk from his mother unless it was within the context of a sucrose filled cereal. I failed him.”
The Captain placed his hand on the knuckle of the hand’s pinky. Which in human terms would probably be his shoulder.
“That’s not true, Lefty. You did all you could.”
“Please, don’t call me Lefty anymore.”
“Hamburger Helper?”
“God, no. That’s a stupid political nickname”
“Then what?”
“Call me Leftviticus. The name my mother chose for me before she passed.”
“Okay then, Leftviticus. It would be my pleasure.”
The two smiled now. Leftviticus placed his pinky finger on the shoulder of his traveling companion. He looked again at the face of the man beside him. He was again looking away. Yet this time his cheeks were flush with a berry-like red.
“And you? What is your name?”
“Like I said, it’s Crunch.”
“You know that’s not what I mean,” he used his pinky finger on the back of Crunch’s head. Leftviticus stared into the eyes of the older man. The Captain mumbles first and then,
“Horatio. My name is Horatio.”
“Well Horatio, thank you.”
“You don’t have to”
“I want to.”
Dragging his finger down Horatio’s neck, Leftviticus flashed a smile before his lips greeted that of The Captain. With Horatio Crunch doubled over him Lefty wasn’t sure what was working harder, his mind or his tongue. They stayed there with entangled faces feeling the cool breeze of the summer night. Tasting one another over and over again. They only pulled away from each other far enough and long enough to catch their breath.
“Are you sure about this?” The Captain gasps.
Without speaking Leftviticus used his middle two fingers to undo the top button of Horatio’s coat. Blushing he undid the other and The Captain shrugged the article of clothing off his shoulders and let it slump to the floor. He was faced with a trail of salt and pepper hair trailing from his chest and tapering away towards Crunch’s belly button.

In one motion Captain Crunch simultaneously brought the handlike figure closer to him and pulled him away from the window. Slowly Horatio eased himself onto the edge of the bed. Positioned onto the sitting Captain’s lap was a Hamburger Helper feeling more eager to ‘help’ himself than he ever had before. Feverishly Leftviticus worked his mouth overtime across the manly torso. He kissed, licked, and bit when he could. Eliciting noises of pleasure sweeter than twelve whole grams of sugar per serving.
Horatio Magellan Crunch could stand it no longer. The bare chested man grabs hold of each side of the hand rolling him over so now the back of the Hamburger Helper was on the recently cleaned sheets. Looking up at him with a redness like the sauce off a tomato basil penne there was little that the little hand could do but lay there, pinned.
Captain Crunch began by tracing a hand down the outside shape of this helpful and handy lover. Starting at the top of the pinky and gliding downwards toward the wrist part of the glove. Slipping two fingers under the piece of fabric and touching skin. Staring with his black glossy eyes Leftviticus moaned out with a single short breath. While trailing over this seemingly sensitive piece of skin The Captain used his free hand to lower his white pants to display his beef. As he touched his passion began to grow and he himself began stroganoff.
The Hamburger Helper couldn’t last under this experienced man’s hands much longer. He eyed up this heaping helping of protein in front of him and he knew that his next meal would be one that was most nutritious. Leftviticus pursed his lips and let the deluxe sized fill-me cheesesteak enter him. The meeting of tongue on member created a sound so erotic it is hard even to describe. Yet, since it is my job as narrator I shall go on to describe it. It was almost as if you grabbed dried carbohydrates, powdered seasonings, some sort of ground beef, water, and in some cases milk then mixed them together in a pot. Just stirring over and over and over again. And then over again. And again.
Letting out a long groan The Captain released his berrytastic pancake mix. Lefty swallowed every last drop of this maple flavored syrup straight from the tap.
Out of breath and exhausted the two collapsed into an embrace on the bed. Their touch tender. Their bond now undoubtedly stronger. Now nothing would pull them from one another this night.

On the dock Horatio carried a suitcase. It was the same navy blue as his hat and coat with a golden lining around the outside. A deckhand offered his hand and proceeded to load it onto the ship for him.
Shuffling in behind him was Leftviticus. Still visibly tired even beneath his signature sunglasses. The Captain thought maybe he’d overdone it last night. He remembered the look that the Hamburger Helper had given away as The Captain returned his clothes to his body in the morning. Equal parts of embarrassment and wanting.
Before boarding the ship Leftviticus wanted only one thing. To hold Horatio close to him once more. Seemingly as if he had read his mind Horatio Crunch grabbed Leftviticus by the thumb and pulled him into a hug. He whispered then something not quite audible. Before pulling away he kissed the small hand on the cheek briefly. This action confirming the inevitable truth that Leftviticus already knew. Captain Crunch would not be joining him on the S.S. Crackle.
Before Leftviticus boarded the ship Horatio had to do only one thing. He produced a letter from within his jacket. He handed it to Leftviticus.
“Promise me you won’t read this until you have made it to America safely.”
“But...”
And without letting him get another word out Horatio kissed him again.
“Farewell, Leftviticus.”
With that Horatio strode away trying to keep his head high despite the pain in his chest. The night was soon approaching and the world as he knew it was soon to be ending. 🍷

An Angel one night stand

by Sean Song

I recall that day when I met them. It was my first day in a new place but yet familiar to me. A classic suburban neighborhood, A small town with local shops and cafes, and many busybodies moving about their day under the backdrop of autumn. Even if it looks and sounds like home, The differences struck a different cord in my soul. Everyday necessities are farther apart, making buses and cars an absolute necessity. Yet the mountains and forests were unexplored and stretched far from what the eye could see. The smell of motor oil and taco spices was replaced by lavender and Pine Nuts. And on that first day in a world unfamiliar to me started with many unlucky circumstances.

There was an incessant ringing in my ear. My headache pounded as I pulled myself out of my warm, comfortable bed. I instinctively looked at my phone to check the time or maybe some messages my friends had left for me the night before. It read “11 am”. I put my phone back on the dresser and pulled the covers back over me. “11 am,” I thought to myself.” it is almost lunchtime... between classes...” I vaulted out of my bed and checked my phone in a frenzy. “August 31, 11:01 am.” I read more clearly. “SHIT!” I put on my cargo shorts and t-shirt, threw over my bag, and ran out the door. As I heard the iron door slammed behind me, a little birdy put a reminder on me and whispered in my ear, “Did you forget your phone and Wallet.” I patted down my pants, and I realized I had locked myself out of my room with my Key card in my wallet. I raced through my mind for a solution but got the bright-ish idea to call Campus Safety to unlock my door for me. I pulled out my nonexistent phone to dial their number, but my still-sleepy head realized I had no phone, to begin with. The same birdie in my ear told me, “I still need to get to class.” Conflict between technology and knowledge, I made the urk-some decision.

I rushed over, putting all my fat hamstrings and thinking of all the running techniques my 4th-grade coach taught me. Thankfully, I made it with the bus almost shutting the doors. I look around in the empty bus to look for a seat. I sat in the back and looked through the window as the house, trees, and farmland mixed into an autumn smoothie. I beat myself over on how stupid I missed the first day of class. I slump over as I feel the presence of some sitting right next to me. I thought it was an awkward move and was about to tell off this to a socially inept individual. But I saw that no one was sitting right next to me. I was puzzled as the bus pulled up in front of the Amherst College bus stop, and a bunch of students poured into the bus. As I went back to my sulking, I thought I saw someone staring at me but ain’t out of the ordinary as people tend to look around. The bus pulled up in front of a concrete theater building. I stepped out of the bus, wiping off my sulking. I am an adult now. There is no time for tears. It is time to learn and get what I worked for. My pride immediately deflated as a cold immediately whipped past my exposed legs. “It was 80 degrees yesterday. Why is it so cold?” I said as my teeth chattered and my arms clasped my body. I looked at my phone but realized I had no phone. All I knew was that I was Fuck-o-Late to class.

It took me a while, but I thankfully found the classroom. With exhausted and bated breath, I opened the door and saw a couple of eyes darting toward my location before they looked back at the Professor. I looked for an open seat and only found a dreaded open seat in front of the Professor. I sighed as I wished I was not the center of attention. I sat back down and started listening to the Professor’s introduction to the course. I slowly became bored, and my eyes wandered around the room. As my eyes glossed over the whiteboard and window to students running about, my eyes were locked on someone sitting right next to me and staring daggers at me. Or rather, They have multiple eyes staring at me.

Their skin has a tan to it but their head is like bald mannequin with eyes covering every part of their head. Their eye colors varied from black to crimson red, emerald green, and magenta. They wore green sweatshirts with a marijuana symbol marked in white and dark blue jeans. By their attire alone, I couldn’t tell if they were

biologically male or female. I look around to see if anyone notices this creature. None. Some are intently looking at the Professor’s every word, down at their computers, or outside and bored out of their skull. I looked back and saw all the eyes staring at me.

“Mr. Kim.” I turned to the Professor. “Do we have Mr. Kim here?”
“Ah, no, Professor,” I glanced at the board. “Luckstin. I am just a bit under the weather, is all.”
“Well, I recommend not wearing such attire in 30-degree weather. You may catch a cold. If you need a refresher, we are doing names, pronouns, and favorite authors.”
“No shit, Sherlock.” I thought to myself. I took a deep breath and spoke, “My name is Phillip Kim. I go by he/him. And, I guess... Myung-hoon Bae is a good one. They make some interesting stories.”
“Well, we can go to... a Mr. Abrams.”

The eyes immediately darted directly at the Professor, and spinning rings formed around their head. They spoke in an uncanny echo as if they were speaking through a megaphone off into the distance. “My name is Joshua Abrams, I go by they/them pronouns and I think Helena Fox’s books are some of the most emotionally compelling books.”

I try not to wince at the noise that made up their voice as I try to look directly back at the teacher, trying to avoid eye contact with Mr.Abrams. Out of the corner of my eye, I can see the rings rotate rapidly around their head, and their eyes are staring at me. I am scared shitless. I don’t know what to do right now. I just want to go home and sleep some more.

After glancing back at them and looking at the clock, I heard the words that helped me escape my social awkwardness. “Now that we review the syllabus,” The Professor pauses. “It is time to let you go. Your assignment is online.” Those words sent everyone flying. Some try to gather their things in a hurry. Some talk to their friends as they head off. And I sat there. All of their eyes bore into my soul as they got up from their seats. I tried to pull out my phone to distract myself and pretend I didn’t notice anything. But the horror and realization set in my forgetful mind that I forgot my phone and was shit out of luck. No one is in the room, no way to call for help, and no use in getting away from this imitation of humanity hovering over my desk. No option but to stay still and try to stare at my desk.

“Hello, Mr.Kim.” their voices shooked my core. “You seemed a bit frightened. Is there something wrong?” I couldn’t muster a single word. My heart beats faster. I grip my hands. “Ah, I see. You can see through my disguise. You are the first and only one to see through it. And like winning the lottery, you will receive a special prize.” And like that, my heart gave out, and everything went dark.

The smell of burning toast stirred my slumber. My blurred vision came into view as fluorescent lights shone over me. My brain slowly processed that I was laying down on my back. My sense of touch felt the enveloping touch of an itchy blanket and a springy mattress holding my back. I looked and saw the white curtains covering every view of the room.

“A hospital room?” I thought to myself. “But why the smell of toast if I am in a hospital?”
“Because I am making something for you to eat.” Joshua lifts the curtains with a plate full of toasted bread.
“AAAAAAHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH, WTF YOU ARE DOING HERE!!?” as I pulled the blanket closer to me.

“I am simply looking after your well-being, Mr.Kim. According to the doctor, you simply passed out due to stress and hunger. Likewise, I bought bread from this college’s commissary and a toaster from the break room to give you the sustenance you need.”
“Okay, one. I just woke up and can barely understand half of what you are saying. And two, WTF ARE YOU!?”

“I would say the same of your unsettling two-eyed existence, but I have the manners, foresight, and self-

control to not scream or shout in the college’s infirmary.”

I tried to rebut their insult, but my self-consciousness booted me in the head, leaving me quite sorry for Joshua, the other patients, and me. I rubbed the back of my head. I felt the guilt within as my mind started to race through all the improperness and stress I put on someone I barely knew. As I felt the weight and warmth from the plate of burnt toast on my lap, I looked up at Joshua. “I... I am terribly sorry. I... I... didn’t mean to. I don’t know what I am even doing anymore. I...” I felt a gentle pat on my back. I felt tears stream from my face onto the plate in front of me.

“Such odd creatures of your kind are. It is quite interesting to be over-excited over minor details. But even then, I take no offense to your screams, shouts, or thoughts of calling me a creature. If anything, I tend to like the sound of it. I would even be more surprised if you saw me like this and had no reaction whatsoever. Either way, eat and regain your strength, Mr. Kim” they put a piece of toast in my mouth.

“Can they Read my thoughts?” I rubbed the back of my head. “That is absurd. Is there such a creature among us?”

“Oh, quite so, Mr. Kim,” they stated as if it was the fact. “Ah, the sheer disbelief on your face. It never gets old.”

“Then... Wait, wait, wait.” I furrow my brow as I put another piece of toast in my mouth
“Even If I wanted to, I can’t stop it. It is like being in a cafe where someone whinges on the service in your favorite restaurant. Fun, insightful, but overall annoying.

“Then, what are you?” I asked to finish the plate of toast.
“Your kind used to call me a wheel. I think we now call it an Angel.” They handed me a water bottle.
“That, I didn’t expect that answer.” I cap it and start to drink it.
“Yes, your kind tends to enjoy beauty rather than efficiency. But regardless, we have to proceed with your reward.”

“Mhm.” I proceed to drink the entire bottle
“You will have sex with me.”
“PPPPPPPPFFFFFFFFTTTTTTTTT” I spilled my water. “WHAT!!”
“Manners, Mr. Kim. I believe there is no way around it.”
“Don’t say it as a matter of fact.” I wipe the water off my face. “Why is that the reward?”
“Essentially, Mr.Kim. It is the most common way to curry favor with humans. We have no reason to participate in your society, so we have no wealth or power to help your endeavors. But stimulating their reproductive organs is the best way to keep our existence a secret.” I started to furrow my brow. “But it seems you are hesitant about it. If you wish, I could change my appearance.”

“I... It just seemed so sudden. It is just something right out of a bad erotica.” I rubbed my hand against my face in anguish.
“It is simply how we have done it for the entirety of human history.”
“Isn’t it just easier to swear to secrecy?”
“They did in the past, but that is why we are only in one book and no more afterward. But it isn’t a favor for a favor’s sake. Rather, it is a soul-binding contract for us Angels to remain in secrecy. After the favor is made, you may not be able to remember us or may never see me or any other ‘Angels’ again. Any other Angel would do the same. I would like not to delve further into the matter as you seemed more sensitive to that information.”
I rubbed my temples. I am trying to process all I can. I don’t even know how to feel. Any Dick, Bob, or Joe would gladly do it to get some action, but...
“It seems you made up your mind,” as they sat down on my bed.
I put up my hand. “No, if we are going to do it. You’re going to do it, right. We are dating to get to know each other right now.”

The sound of metal scrapping metals sharply pierces the background noise of hot food. Hunched over and clasping my hands, I sat right next to Joshua, who seemed to spread himself all over the bench, waiting for our order.

“You mean the one I paid for,” they said as they played with the receipt with the tip of their fingers.
“I will pay you back,” I chirped.
“I know. But it seems you are a bit cheerful, Mr. Kim.” Joshua oddly questions
“You can read my mind, don’t you? So you know why I am happy.” I throw my hand into the air and from them into a pillow to rest on my head as I fully recline on the bench

“Yes, but I want to hear it from their mouth. It’s how they want to present themselves. A bit of control in their lives. It doesn’t matter if they lie to my face or about their intentions. I am indifferent to it. I only care about what they want to present themselves.” Joshua calmly said with some huff in their tone.
“I am happy because I got to eat something today. I messed up so much today..” I stare at the open blue sky. “I even messed up your life.”

“A Falafel wrap and Pork Gyro,” said the Food truck Owner looking in our direction. I stood up to go get it. I came back and handed them their wrap. Joshua gets up and grabs my hand with both hands while I am still holding their wrap. All of their eyes looked directly at me.
“You didn’t mess up anything, Mr.Kim. For you, it is a matter of execution, allowing love to ease the pain of those mistakes. For me, it was going to happen sooner or later. I don’t want to think about it if it was anyone else. I would prefer someone like you. A hopeless romantic in a new world. If anything, I will wait for you. We can do it when you are ready. Think of me as your Guardian Angel.”
I hugged them with both orders in hand, and my tears flowed from me. “Then, please wait for me, then.”
“Heh, easily moved by emotions. Let us eat then.” their head split open, revealing jagged, sharp teeth and a long whip-like tongue. They proceeded to eat the wrap by using their tongue to grab it, quickly dragging it into their obtuse maw, and that maw snapped like a mouse trap, swallowing it whole. I am shocked by this. And likewise, they uttered as if it were fact, “That is a good face and a lovely meal.”

The semester has passed by us. I felt the time has past us by so fast. I’ve slowly learned some weird quirks with Joshua. They used to eat like a mussel, using their tongue like a main appendage and quickly shoving food into their maw like a kitchen trash can with a foot pedal. They even tried to eat my only cooking pan along with the fried rice. Apparently, they can eat anything, but I insisted that they just eat the food that regular humans eat. But now, they mostly like to savor their meals, using their tongue like regular humans. Another one would be expressing their emotions. When they are nervous, their eyes dart around. When they cry, only two of their eyes will cry. When they get happy or excited, more rings appear above their head and spin around like crazy. Even so, I realized that I’d gotten used to their appearance. I even found it cute, especially when I show Them something new and they become giddy. It was fun to hang around with them and share memories with them.

Snow lightly falls on us as we head back to my dorm. I don’t remember why I invited them that day as all reasons before meshed into a whole reason to have some company that night. It gets terribly lonely at night. It is like being at the bottom of the ocean. Alone with my thoughts. Thoughts that haunt and taunt my every step. I don’t want to think about it. I grabbed their hand as we walked back. Our hands clasped like clockwork gear. When we got back inside and dusted the snow off us, I asked if I could hug them. They hugged me while uttering another word. I felt safe within their embrace. All my worries washed away all the cold and depression as I felt their warmth and presence. I asked them to have sex with me. I felt two cold teardrops land on my thin sweatshirt. I told them it was okay if they didn’t want to do it. They told me it was fine. They are just nervous.
We headed up the stairs towards my room, holding our hands together and leading them as if leading them to a new unknown. I opened the door and grabbed the box of condoms from my dresser. I hear them unloosen their clothes as they close the door behind me. I put my hand over their face and felt all their closed eyes

as I caressed their face. “Let’s have a safe word. Just in case,” I softly whispered to them

“You know I can hear your thoughts,” as they hold me tightly and feel their flat chest against my back

“But don’t you want to hear it from my mouth?” as I tilted my head off to the side to get a look at them.

“Peanut Butter,” they muttered as their face is flushed with red

I tore the small package open and put it in my dick.They embraced me from behind. I turned around, and they inserted their tongue into my mouth. I was in complete bliss as our tongues motions synchronized into a dance of embrace. We fell onto my bed. Our bodies instantly meshed together into one being as I felt their bare chest against my own. They stood up and straddled over me, with their long tongue still in my mouth. I saw their hardened dick, dripping with pre-cum on my chest. They lifted their body as they were about to ride me, but I made a muffled noise and tapped their ass. their tongue slowly retracted into their mouth as their eyes darted around frantically.

“Shhh, don’t worry, Josh. I will be back with some lube so that it will be special with us together.” I whispered. I hop off and reach around my dresser. I found those packers that they gave me to use when I first got here. I never thought I would use it, but here I was. I turned around and found them with their ass raised to me and their excited dick twitches. But what caught me off guard was that they also had a pussy. Even though new ideas rushed through my head, I still wanted to continue with my plan. I got another condom and put it over their dick. I put some lube on my fingers and rubbed it against their peach-pink asshole. I put my watering mouth over their dick and then suck it as I continue rubbing their asshole. I heard their muffled moans as I inserted one of my fingers into their ass and created a rhythmic motion.

I felt comfortable inserting two fingers. “Don’t stop, Philly,” they moan. I found a bump in my butt and proceeded to press it with two of my fingers. their dick twitched, and they made a loud, muffle moan, cumming into my mouth. I pulled the condom off their limp dick with my mouth and pulled my fingers out of their asshole. I tied the condom up and saw ten rings form around their head, with them completely flushed with red. “How did you do that?” they asked while catching their breath.

“I saw it in a Wiki how article,” I jokingly said

“What else can you show me?” as the rings rotate around their head.

“We continue with what you try to do.” and pointed at my dick, twitching and rock hard.

We clasped our hands together. I fall on the bed, and they straddle me like last time. They lift themselves up and gently fall on my member. My head was immediately filled with ecstasy as they clamped tightly on me. I felt our hands melt with one another. I could think of nothing but pleasure as they rode up and down. Our moans became a symphony of pleasure as their ring spun like a saw. their mouth was fully unhinged, letting their tongue hang out. I embraced them and used both hands to slam their butt into my member.

“Ahhhhh, Philly. This is too much. If you stop now, I will go crazy. Keep going!” they moaned

“I am sorry, Josh.” “I can’t help it. I want more of you.” I controlled the rhythm. But soon, I felt my dick was about to explode. “I am gonna!”

“I am too. Give it all to me!”

We came together as their seed marked both our chests. We fell together on my bed, lying side by side. I look over at them. They smiled at me and licked my face. I kissed them back. But my eyes went heavy. And my vision became a blur. There was something I wanted to tell them, but I couldn’t make out the words as my brain fell unconscious.

I woke up naked in my bed. I lifted myself from bed and looked around to see they were gone. They were gone. The condoms, their clothes, and the dry cumstains are gone as if they didn’t exist. They said they would disappear when they did the favor. Tears start to well up in my eyes as I grip my blanket.

“Bastard. Why leave me now? We had something really special,” I muttered to myself. “Please come back. Please. Don’t leave me alone.”

I heard a knock on the door. I didn’t want to see anyone right now. I wiped away the tears. I assumed it was my neighbor going to rag at me for being too loud last night. “I am gonna sleep more after my apology,” I thought. I pull up a pair of sweatpants and walk over to the door.

“Sorry about the noise from last night. I was-” as I opened the door. But saw Josh with a paper bag in hand.

“Yo, Philly. I got us some breakfast. I know you don’t like scrambled eggs, so I-,” I hugged them and cried. I held them tightly to me. “You stupid eye-filled head. I thought you left me.”

“I said, ‘May.’ It is our choice if we want to be seen again. I want to see you again, so I remained.” Josh said with a slight panic in their voice.

“Then, let me say this to you.” I pulled away and clasped both of my hands.

“I love you.” 🐶

YOU THOUGHT YOU WERE SAFE IN SEX
ZONE? **WRONG**
WILD PENIS BLAST ENCOUNTER

PENIS BLAST!

PENIS BLAST!

PENIS BLAST!

PENIS BLAST!

PENIS BLAST!

End-of-Career Marlon Brando Walks Across the screen and says the Word “Penis.”

by Isaiah Woods

Authors Note:

It is my belief that the term “Erotica” is one that is thrown around far too freely these days; there is an art to the erotic that I fear has been long since lost to the annals of time, only to be violently replaced by far more vulgar depictions of sensuality. Erotica used to mean something. It represented the artistry of human sensuality; the avantgarde. Sadly, as is demonstrated in the thoroughly bawdy work of my fellow contestants, Erotica, or as I like to call it, La littérature érotique, is dead. What was previously left to the imagination is now all but shoved in our faces, creating a society of desensistised cyborgs. The subtle art of what previously constituted “the erotic” has been violently tossed out of the door, making way for metric tons of common smut, in essence masacring a sacred art form that is predicated on a subtextual understanding of the intrinsic sexuality that makes us up as humans, by replacing what used to be a form of daring expressionism with mere masturbatory aids. We have sacrificed the dignity of our depictions of carnality for the convenience of the cheap dime store thrill, substituting fine anatomical words such as “Penis” and “Buttocks”, for petty vulgarities such as “Cock” and “Ass.” Great works of art centering around the nature of human sexuality such as “Wuthering Heights” and “Lady Chatterly” have been all but replaced by far less flattering titles such as “Garfield Gets a Massive Boner” and “Reader X Donkey Kong: Valentines Day Adventure” (A work that frustratingly enough does not contain the titular character, but instead some tertiary character from the “Donkey Kong Country” animated series, named Bluster Kong, a deified industry-capitalist.) Sensuality has been traded out for obscenity; subtlety for volume; The voluptuous form of Donkey Kong for the epitome of mediocrity. Erotica used to be a term that meant something, standing for a form of creation that not only titilated, but commented on the world around it and the liberating effects of expressing sexuality; while I cannot for certain say that this commentary does not exist somewhere within the depths of the twenty-six pages that surface when I search “Shrek X Farquaad” on Ao3, I have my doubts that any such commentary that I found would prove to be much more than glib pokes at the intrinsic problematisism of the phallocentric nature of our society. While I could continue to spew my uninformed, faux-snooty, pseudo-academic, bullshittery at you, I have chosen to enlighten you on the nuances of writing La littérature érotique, by including a screenplay of mine written in (truncated) iambic pentameter, as an illustration on what Erotica could look like if we endeavor to preserve it as an art form. For the consideration of “The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences” I present to you:)

End-of-Career Marlon Brando Walks Across the screen and says the Word “Penis.”

An Original Screenplay, and Exploration of our Fluid Definition of Sensuality in our Society.

by
Isaiah Woods

(EXT. Day- We are outside a Chuck-E.-Cheese. Several seconds of silence. A beat. Enter Marlon Brando [On the off chance he’s dead, cast end-of-career Marlon Brando Type] He begins to walk across the frame, first slowly, but then slowly. A beat... and then:)

END-OF-CAREER MARLON BRANDO:
(Looking at the camera)
Penis.

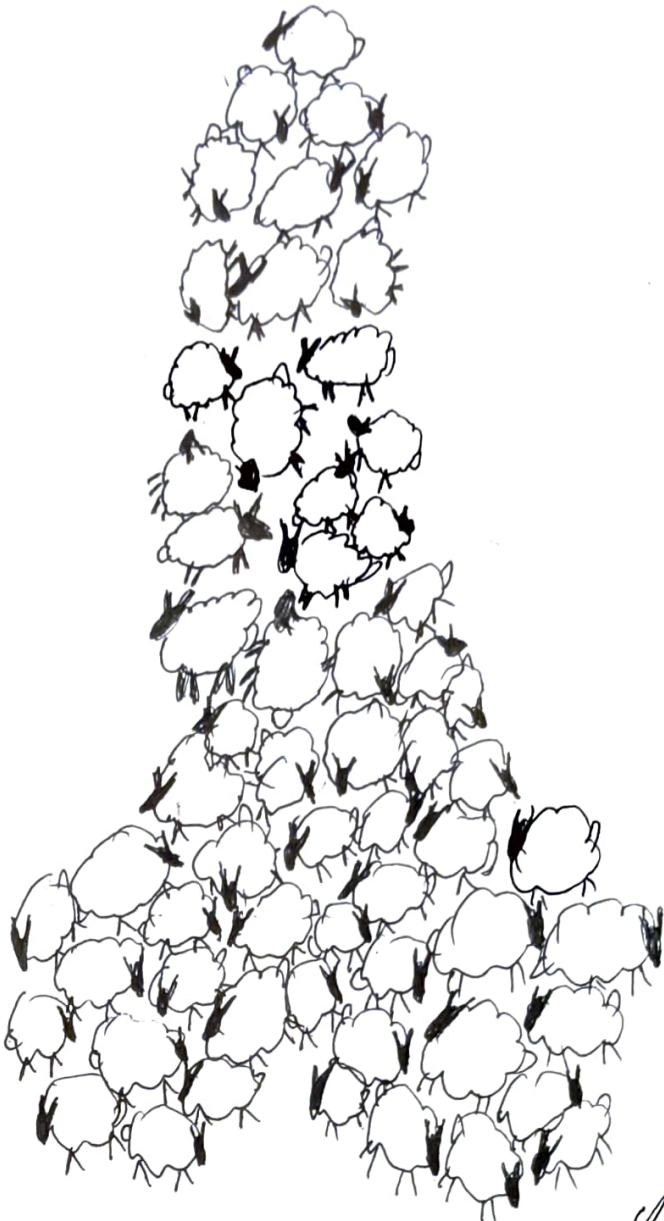
(A beat. The world is at peace; god is happy. Fade to Black.)

FIN.

(Submitted for the consideration of A24)

remember me when i am gone.
one more for the road, old friend?

Penis
Blast.



Mini

